

DIVA

DECEMBER 2015

Kristen
Stewart

"I definitely have
a rebellious side"

FIND THE
PERFECT
LEZ/BI
XMAS GIFT

TROUBLE IN
PARADISE

Lesvos' refugee crisis

DEANZ

BRITAIN'S ONLY LESBIAN
DANCEHALL STAR

LESBIAN
GHOSTS

Yes, you read
that right

HOMOPHOBIC
HATE CRIME

WHY WE NEED
TO REPORT IT

BAHAR MUSTAFA

Why was a bisexual Asian
woman accused of racism?

12 WAYS TO
SURVIVE
CHRISTMAS

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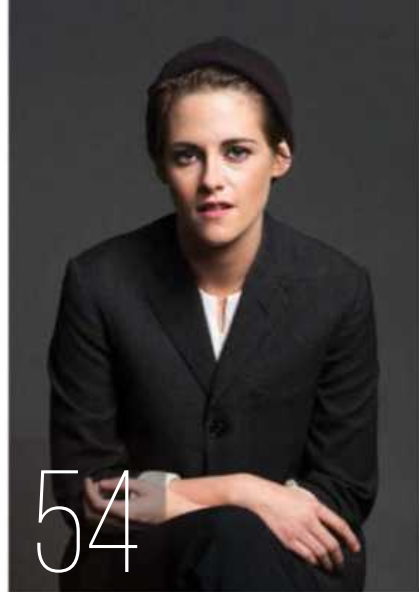


**Pink
Sofa.**

Quality
Lesbian
Connections

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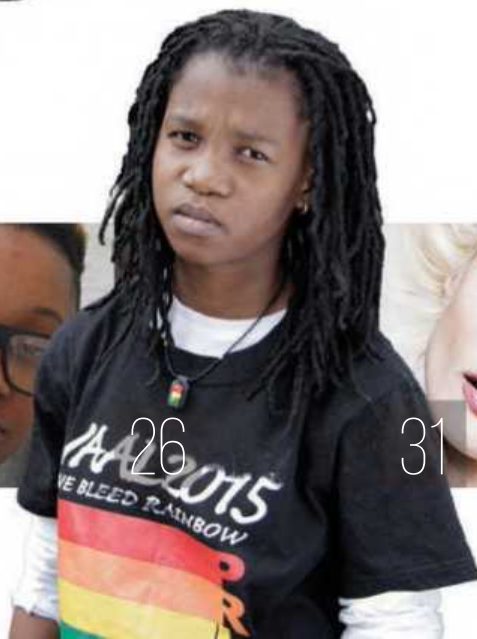
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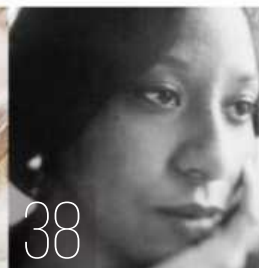
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COVER

Photography
Drew Gurian

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online and TV



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this complementary content when you purchase our digital edition from divadigital.co.uk or directly through the DIVA branded app, available on the App Store, Google Play, Kindle Newsstand and Windows Store.

(Please note that additional content may not be available via all of our third-part digital suppliers. However, buying the issue using one of the methods above will give you access to this content.)

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Christmas, that's come around quickly! We know it's a bit of a mixed bag: some of us love it, some not so much, so with that in mind, we've **scoured the land for queer businesses, artists and crafters** so you can buy your loved ones gifts and support community businesses while you shop (p46) and (p60). Because **some of us like our Christmas a little different** – with the honourable exception of Susan Calman (p20) – we asked counsellor Alena Dierickx to help us with a few suggestions on how to **take a more innovative approach to the festivities** (p64).

We've a bumper crop of arts-related features this month. From **queer Muslim artist Raisa Kabir's** exploration of what it feels like to be both included and excluded by your own communities (p28) to author **Andrea Stuart's beautiful and thoughtful coming out story** (in extract) on p38. **Author/performer Yang-May Ooi** reflects on what it means to be a lesbian Asian woman living in the West (p62). Many of us know what it's like to be affected by homophobic abuse and Louise Carolin's powerful feature on this issue (p66) reflects how, **despite significant legal changes, hate incidents persist**. Perhaps our experiences of feeling cast out explains why **LGBT people are heading to Lesbos to help refugees** fleeing persecution, as Mel Steel discovers (p72). Finally, this month we have two great offers on our print edition – get 3 issues for £7.99 or, even better, 6 issues for just £14.99. That's **37% off the cover price**. And an offer you won't find anywhere else. More details on p12.

Jane Czynszelska
DIVAMAG.CO.UK

NEXT MONTH



JANUARY ISSUE on sale 17 December

Ellen Page talks about the movie *Freeheld* and why she wishes she'd come out sooner
How to resolve and manage disputes and when it's safer not to
Do you have work/life balance? Claire Fox shows you how
Who are the most powerful lesbian and bi politicians in the world? DIVA investigates
You don't own me: Surya Monro on the commodification of bisexual women
Lesbian actress Cherry Jones on her new role in *Transparent* series 2
Kasha Nabagasera, Uganda's award-winning lesbian activist

CONTACT US!



GOT AN IDEA FOR AN ARTICLE?

Email edit@divamag.co.uk and tell us all about it



WANT TO GIVE US SOME FEEDBACK OR SHARE AN EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER READERS?

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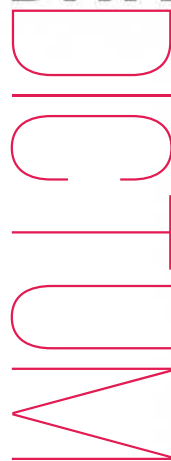
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DIVA



What will you be putting on top of your Xmas tree?

Editor Jane Czynszelska

"A seasonal unicorn, obviously"

Deputy editor Louise Carolin

"Put? The cat's quite capable of getting herself up there"

Editorial assistant Carrie Lyell

"I'm going traditional with a life-size replica of Kristen Stewart"

Designer Fernando Safont

"A three-headed, green-scaled-skin baby Jesus"

Music editor Sarah-Jane Roberts

Books editor Eden Carter Wood

Film editor Lucy Peters

Diary editor Dora Mortimer

Art editor Anna McNay

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FROM 17 DECEMBER 2015

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Star Letter

NO SKIRT, NO JOB

My girlfriend has been job hunting for the past two months. It's unbelievably tough out there at the moment. Invited back for a third interview things were looking hopeful. As part of the final questions the boss just checked that she "wouldn't have a problem with wearing a skirt" as "this is something we've had problems with before". My girlfriend, to label her, is tomboyish/soft-but. The last time she wore a skirt she was a closeted teenager, depressed and hiding in her Eastern European country. She has had to turn this job down, she could not work in an environment that does not accept her for who she is. It is difficult for us at the moment financially but, without children, we can just about manage, and can therefore take this stand. But how is this still possible?! A company feels they can stipulate a certain type of feminine/woman – and the law allows this? Unfortunately, because it is not overtly about her sexual orientation, and she is not re-assigning her gender, it does not fit under the Equality Act. Also, since there is an equal restriction on men (they have to wear trousers), it is not discrimination by gender – it's a gender binary attitude. There must be other (most probably gay/bi) women who have experienced this? Please get in contact – we need to change this restrictive attitude! Also, if anyone needs a hard-working, loyal employee in Brighton let us know!

ADELE BATES, @AdeleSoprano



STAR LETTER PRIZE

The writer of this month's star letter will shortly be receiving a kit from our friends at CHOC Chick. Kits enable chocolate lovers to create and enjoy ethically-sourced chocolate free from dairy, gluten, processed sugar, additives and, most importantly, guilt. It's a piece of cake to rustle up a truffle or treat yourself or a loved one to a cheeky chocolate cocktail or heart-warming hot chocolate with CHOC Chick Super Kit, worth £54.99. chocchick.co.uk



WRITE TO US

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or use the old-fashioned method and drop us a line at

DIVA MAGAZINE

Spectrum House, Unit M
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London NW5 1LP
United Kingdom

REMEMBERING REVOLUTIONARIES

I read your heartfelt article, Honoring Our Elders (November), and I was inspired by the notion that women of colour were at the forefront of LGBT rights during the Stonewall years and beyond. However, I was equally disturbed to learn that these women (DeLarverie, Rivera...) have been left out of the story regarding the struggle for freedom. So, I began to think about what could be done to expose the truth. Here's a possible suggestion: tapping a major director such as Ava DuVernay to produce a documentary honouring the women of colour and Latinas who paved the way to LGBT rights?

Opinions expressed by correspondents and contributors do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of DIVA magazine or its publishers.

Lastly, thank you so much for an inspiring article on our brave women who sacrificed their lives so that people today can enjoy some level of LGBT freedom.

MARY

MISSING STORIES

Thanks for the articles about the missing stories of lesbian, bi and trans women in both the Stonewall story and also in the suffragette movement.

I'm new to all this and it's fascinating. I felt I had to write and say keep speaking out! These women did so much and it's inspiring how people can bring about change.

EMMA



CALL OUT

Ten years on from the introduction of civil partnerships, researchers from Coventry University (Dr Adam Jowett) and the University of Worcester (Prof Elizabeth Peel) are conducting research about same-sex couples' experiences of legal recognition, and the impact (or not) of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013. To find out more about the study and/or to take part, visit: coventry.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/civil-partnership-same-sex-marriage.



Cover girls Jennifer Joint and Eleni Miariti sizzled in last month's Sex Issue



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Smiths only had one @DIVAmagazine delivered and it's sold. Bloody lesbians. Also, say that, cashier laughs, old lady nearly dies. Funny.

@xjustmariannex

Finally subscribed to @DIVAmagazine on their app. No need to hide them like a 16yr old boy with porn!

@_choobacca

Sharp, insightful column on queer sex, community and surveillance in the digital age by @thebeef in the current @DIVAmagazine. #mustreads

@laurenwont

Okay, Sarah Westwood's article about lube in @DIVAmagazine is making me cry with laughter. More Westwood, pls! #WD40

@meowwwwmolly

Bought my very first issue of @DIVAmagazine today. Love it! Nice to read something I can so easily relate to.

@hildadev

Reading my October @DIVAmagazine and see the utterly gorgeous @sophieannaward and a great interview - made my Sunday!

@lady4rd

Began our journey reading @DIVAmagazine over 4 years ago. Now me & the Mrs are 20 weeks closer to having a little one.

@lghaf

Blocked out my whole weekend for the @DIVAmagazine #sexissue and pots of tea. (Only kidding*) *Not kidding.

@LauraRMyers

I'm rare species: a tall lesbian. My gf is not. So, @WHSmith - pls don't put @DIVAmagazine on the top shelf. I hurt myself laughing at her.

@emilyrose_uk

The posh drunk boys were talking about being mistaken for gay as though that were bad. So I took out my @DIVAmagazine



Pleased to meet you!



Every issue, we invite one of our readers to tell us about her relationship with DIVA.



NAME & AGE:

HANNAH WRIGHT, 22

FROM:

LONDON

OCCUPATION:

SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER

IDENTITY:

LESBIAN

WHAT MADE YOU START READING DIVA?

I first bought a copy because I saw Lucy Spraggan on the cover, who I love.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A READER?

About two years.

PRINT OR DIGITAL?

Print, always.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT DIVA?

It's the only lesbian and bisexual magazine that I know of and can relate to. I think the Sarah Westwood articles are always brilliant and the hot women are obviously a plus!

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF?

More fashion articles centred around different body shapes would be good.

HOW MANY PEOPLE READ YOUR COPY?

Myself and, only once I've finished reading it, my girlfriend.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR COPY WHEN YOU'VE READ IT?

I keep them to add to my collection.

WHO WOULD YOU PUT ON THE COVER AND WHY?

Lucy Spraggan again because she was the first celebrity that I fancied and I really like her music and tattoos.

WANT TO INTRODUCE YOURSELF?

Send a photo and your answers to the questions above to letters@divamag.co.uk



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Virtually queer



It was eight in the morning, no-one had slept and everyone was coming down from a really good party.

The kind where the number of lost wallets, drugs and phones amounts to a mini fortune for the hosts. The city hadn't yet woken up – it was Sunday morning – so we found ourselves in that hazy limbo when all the station barriers are open. For a few hours, London is a different place: public transport is free and the trains are basically empty save a few exploited cleaners. I figured this was a good time to get out my virtual reality headset.

It was nothing special – just some random objects I'd 3D-scanned at a workshop and arranged in a programme called Unity. Then I'd loaded the final project onto my phone, slotted it into a headset and boom: a whole new world. It was passed around at least three times, and I suppose the novelty lay in how all-encompassing the experience is, and how curious it is to be seeing into a world that others around you can't see. We were a group of queers, on the Overground, spinning around with a black headset strapped to our faces. It was beautiful and strange.

A few weeks before, I gave a talk at the ICA about queer people and technology. It was called *The Cinema Exists To Please Women*, a line taken from a mid-20th century analysis of filmgoers

and filmmaking: most of the goers were women, and so most of the films were aimed at women. Now, as we know, this isn't the case, even though the stats suggest women still make up most of the cinema-going audience. I had a picture of the late rapper J Dilla's mother on screen, presenting her son's music equipment to the Smithsonian Institute in New York. The instant reaction when the picture came up was laughter. An older black woman presenting some high-tech equipment is funny. For some reason. Which I understand. Old black ladies have zero currency with technology. And there's the rub.


It's not that I'm saying there's a secret and underused army of old black women with mad coding skills who are being excluded. I don't think there is. However, the ideas we have around technology mean that even the notion of such people having anything to do with technology is laughable. This problem of being unable to imagine certain people doing certain things carries over, and we have the delightful result that women and queer people are not really seen as competent techies, are not imagined as the engineers, or pioneers. The imagination is far more important than we make out because if the ideal candidate in someone's mind is still a beardy white guy in plaid, then that is more powerful than any diversity scheme we can concoct.

What's hilarious – and by hilarious, I mean depressing as shit – is the fact that you only have to think about

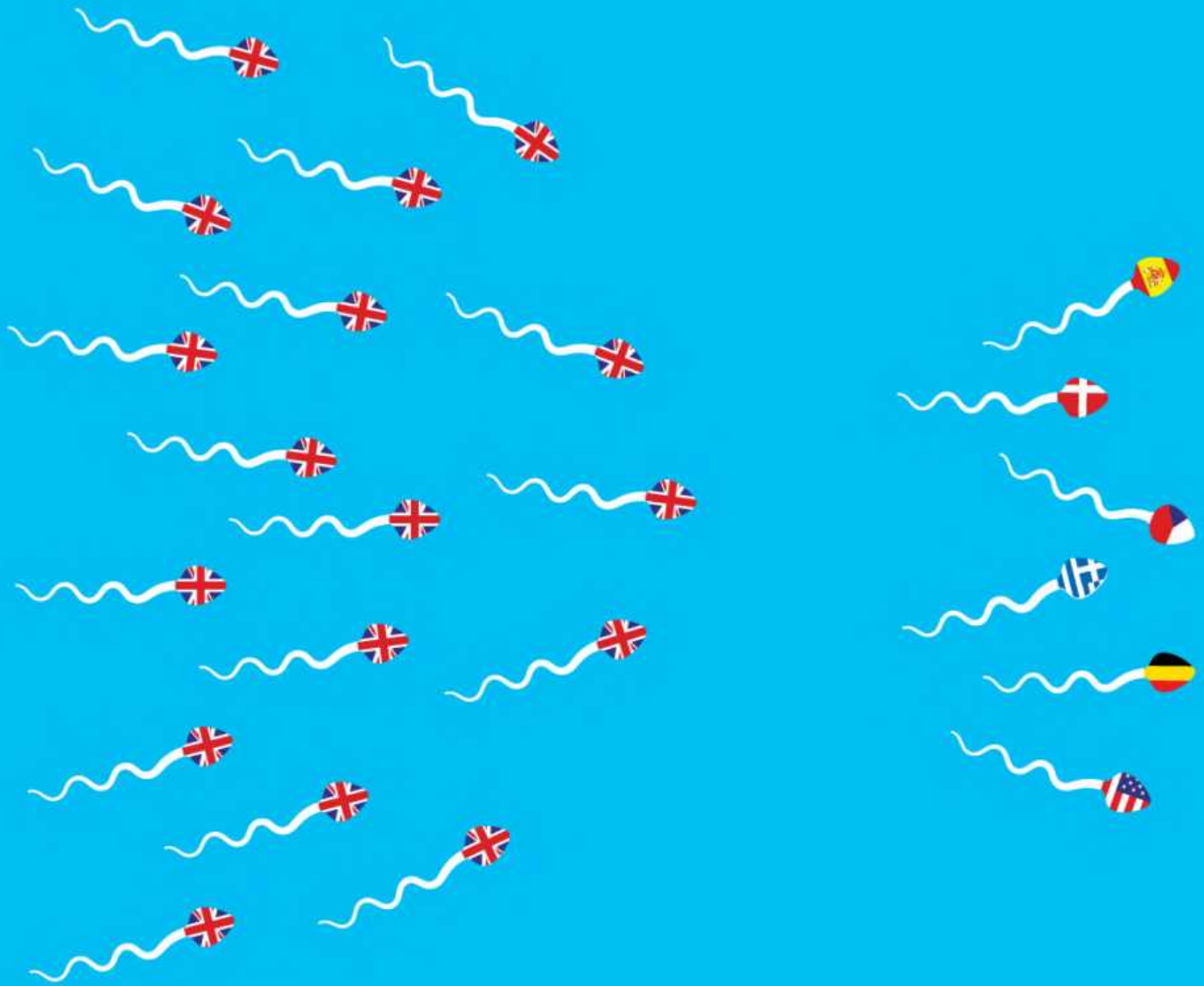
THE BRAVE
NEW WORLD
OF VIRTUAL
REALITY
COULD OFFER
WOMEN AND
QUEER PEOPLE
THE CHANCE
TO SHAPE THE
FUTURE, SAYS
JAY BERNARD

the history of programming to see how this pattern pans out: the first computer programmer was a woman, Ada Lovelace, daughter of the poet Lord Byron. Women were among the first engineers, the first programmers, the first computers (back when being a computer was a job), electronic musicians and cryptographers. Once these fields became important, they were re-imagined as male, because in life only men do important things. Right?

So maybe virtual reality is a chink in the wall; we can see it coming, it's simple to produce content, and as people who are constantly on the margins of the popular imagination, it involves doing something we do rather well: imagining and creating worlds for ourselves.

What if we could get a toehold in this fairly new technology and make it not just about us, but driven and directed for us? Maybe this could be said about all things that are new/shiny/terrifying, but there's something about the immersive nature of virtual reality that feels urgent. As the queer world becomes a weekly night at an otherwise straight or gay-male establishment, as our notions of gender become ever more intricate and fluid, as our offline and online selves become more entwined, as the idea of a 3D extension of social networking becomes more likely, the business of world-creation seems like an important arena for the business of self-determination. 

Imagining
and
creating
worlds for
ourselves
is
something
we do
rather well



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Are we not women?



It's a simple enough mistake. Male barista hands me two coffees adding that he's forgotten which one has sugar.

"That's grounds for divorce," I quip. He looks at me, quizzically, and jokes that he'll tell my husband and shoulder the blame. "Er, actually it's my wife," I counter. In this scenario he mimes a face palm and apologises for making an assumption. It's a small and pleasant exchange, and one that serves as a lesson for both of us.

He learns that despite almost every explicit and implicit communication to the contrary, some people are, in fact, not heterosexual. I learn that this heterosexual man is actually not homophobic but his heterosexual conditioning generates an unconscious bias which makes it necessary for me to have to come out in the coffee shop, as I do most days when unthinking heterosexuals assume that we live in a homogenous hetero world.

Heterosexism is in-built in our culture and its heavy pall is felt not only by people like me but also even those who do define as straight. A heterosexual friend recently told me how much she hates having to gauge whether or not she looks "feminine enough" for certain formal functions she has to attend and how strangers often assume she's gay because she has short hair and prefers trousers and brogues to skirts and ballet pumps. Another bi woman tells me how often she's questioned, by women, about whether she knows she's in the ladies toilets because she "looks like a man". We know that scores of DIVA readers are routinely assumed to be heterosexual because they "don't look gay". When I hold hands with my wife as I walk through town, day or night, I still don't do it in the carefree, unthinking way that heterosexuals can. Almost all of the media and advertising imagery in our cultural landscape is heterosexual.

We are groomed to be heterosexual and gender-normative from birth,

WHY ARE LESBIAN AND BI WOMEN SO INVISIBLE IN MAINSTREAM FEMINIST CULTURE, WONDERS JANE CZYZSELSKA

Feminists like Tina Brown are not just failing gay and bi women – they are out of touch

most of us, unless we're lucky enough to be brought up by queer parents or those who don't impose binary-gendered identification on their children. Concerns about what grandma and grandpa might think or do, concerns about what the parents of other children at kindergarten/school etc will think of you, or your child, are at the root of this gendered dictatorship.


I remember playing with a child at a friend's garden party and borrowing the nail polish that was lying on the blanket on the grass from another child and painting the nails of a six-year-old kid who had asked me to "put colour on my fingers". Within five minutes, the child's father stormed over and accused me of "turning" his son "into a poof". What I found most interesting about this encounter was that despite rigidly policed heteronormative assumptions and corresponding social rules, this chap was worried that a slick of polish would undo all that social conditioning.

Disappointingly – because perhaps naively I like to think that feminists would have the backs of their lesbian and bisexual sisters in struggle – this hetero- and cis-sexism was apparent at magazine editor Tina Brown's Women In The World feminism conference at the star-studded event in Knightsbridge last month. By star-studded, I mean Meryl Streep and Sarah Gavron, director of the lesbian-free zone that is Suffragette the movie, Nicole Kidman, the SNP's Nicola Sturgeon, the Tory home secretary Theresa May, the ballerina Michaela DePrince Coryphée, playwright Bonnie Greer, TV historian Dr Amanda Foreman, Women's Equality Party co-founder Catherine Mayer and architect Zaha Hadid, to list just a few.

No-one taking part in the event talked about the fact that in the UK 62% of LGB graduates will go back in the closet in their first job or that as lesbian or bi women we are 5% less likely to get that job interview because we have something on our CV that identifies us as non-heterosexual. There were no trans women represented at Women In The World and there was no recognition of the increas-

ing number of non-binary people challenging the old, reductive way of being in the world.

None, bar the Daily Telegraph's women's editor Emma Barnett, made reference to lesbian or bi women. Interviewing the fabulous SNP MP Mhairi Black, Barnett asked whether it was a big decision for Black to come out. Finally, some acknowledgment of the heterocentrism that blights our lives. Black's candid response that she was "never in" broke the silence on the otherwise implicitly heterosexual event. As one of only four out lesbian MPs from a total of 650, the question seems pertinent. Ignoring homosexuality will not magically render the world less homophobic. This relative silence on non-normative sexuality, not just at WITW but pretty much everywhere – the Southbank's annual WOW event being a noteworthy exception – endures despite another recent study suggesting that 49% of young people under the age of 25 in the UK identify as "non-heterosexual". This suggests that not only are feminists like Tina Brown failing lesbian and bisexual women, they are also out of touch.

I'll end this rant with the following thought: if we all challenged assumptions about gender and sexuality whenever we see them, how much of a difference could we make to the world – for ourselves and for generations to come? 



Mhairi Black MP for the SNP: the out lesbian MP says she's never been "in"

PHOTO MHAIRBLACK.SCOT

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Why I left

BULLYING AND BY-STANDING HAVE NO PLACE IN QUEER COMMUNITIES, SAYS CHARLOTTE COOPER



Marcel Ophuls' *The Memory Of Justice* has been restored and is doing the festival rounds. A good deal of the film is about the Nuremburg trials, year-long post-war hearings that sought to bring justice to the Holocaust. But Ophuls doesn't leave it there, he asks bold questions about violence, accountability and denial, and how this plays out in other arenas. Thanks to formative encounters with Vito Russo's work on the cinema, I have a pretty good nose for sniffing out queers in film, but I have to say that *The Memory Of Justice* features approximately zero lesbians. Yet queer is in the eye of the beholder and this film resonated strongly with thoughts I've been having about violence and accountability as I take stock of 2015 and look forwards to the new year.

Over the spring and summer I left two queer groups because I could no longer support the cultures of bullying and by-standing that took place in them. Both were online groups, which probably goes a long way in illuminating why they suffered these problems; people sometimes lose the ability to rein it in when they find themselves be-

I spent last Sunday watching a 1976 film that's nearly five hours long. Yeah baby, that's my idea of a dream date.

hind a keyboard. They also positioned themselves as radical but this became an excuse for collective behaviour which was not at all revolutionary.

For example, some members were believed to be more deserving of space than others, which meant that when others tried to speak or, heaven forbid, disagree, they were not just shouted down but made the subject of character assassinations. New members were vetted by close examination of their online friends and, when people got wind of this, their private objections were copied without their consent and posted to the group. This level of paranoia might have been understandable in a group dedicated to, say, bombing Parliament, but this was a community for queer music fans! Leaving the group meant that the trashing merely continued to happen behind the subject's back. Luckily I read Jo Freeman's article *Trashing: The Dark Side of Sisterhood*, also from 1976 and available online, and although that helped put this behaviour into perspective, it's also alarming to see it manifesting nearly 40 years later.

It wasn't long until an atmosphere of fear took grip. Conversation faltered and only certain kinds of talk was acceptable. Ironically, both groups maintained a rhetoric of being safe spaces, a welcoming respite from a cruel world, which I am sure appealed to potential members who felt fragile

or lonely. But what happened is that some people became untouchable and they were supported by a subclass of loyal acolytes who sided with them because this was the safest place to be in the group.

These two groups are not like the Nazis in Ophuls' film. But they have prompted me to think about what kind of person I want to be, what I want to support in the world and what kind of queer space I want to build. I decided to leave both of the groups after one trashing too many. I decided not to be a willing part of communities where bullying and by-standing goes unaddressed, or where some people are treated as expendable for spurious reasons. This was a big deal to me. I am a peace activist and I believe in the transformative power of listening and of dialogue. This isn't about demanding that everyone be polite or nicey-nice, it's an ethic of trying to understand people who are different to you and not shutting things down. But sometimes this is not possible, you are faced with a closed system of denial and speaking up only turns you into a group sacrificial object. Leaving is a way of showing you no longer support the group. As a psychotherapist and sociologist these systems are very interesting to me, but as a person I am only able to take so much. 

charlotte@divamag.co.uk

Some members were believed to be more deserving of space than others

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Santa flaws



Christmas is my favourite time of year, mainly because I get to see my wife for a prolonged period of time without having to dash off

to gigs in far off places. I'm usually home for a couple of weeks without interruption, and we often take advantage of the cosiness of long winter nights to ruminate on our future. What celebrities we do we want to be our friends, when will I finally become Doctor Who, what disappointing present am I going to give her this year, etc etc. But the most common topic of conversation is Christmas itself, specifically what each of us would consider to be our "dream Christmas".

The sad truth is, that in the 13 years we've been together, we've only ever come to one real conclusion. That our dreams are very, very different.

LOCATION

I would want to spend Christmas in my house. This is, of course, my fictional five-storey, detached house with swimming pool, games room, donkey sanctuary and 17-acre garden. My wife would like to disappear into a cabin in the woods away from civilisation for two weeks, just the two of us, with no wifi, television or mobile phones. In other words, complete isolation from the outside world.

She's a monster.

DECORATIONS

My wife favours tasteful, minimal decorations. At the moment we don't even put up a tree in December, and the only ornament we have on display is a small tin reindeer on the mantelpiece, which, to be honest, stays there all year long. Me? I'm the opposite. If I had my way there wouldn't be a surface that wasn't covered in baubles or elves or tinsel. My (fictional) garden would be flooded with lights and I'd have a hilarious pair of Santa legs poking from the chimney. This is the point at which the discussions always become quite heated. Apparently my desire for a neon wonderland of holly and snowmen wouldn't look "tasteful". I call her Scrooge. Then we sit in separate rooms for a while.

THE DAY ITSELF

The only thing we actually agree on is that we would like our respective families to all come round to our house to celebrate the day itself. Sadly, after that things get very tricky indeed. My family Christmas is nothing if not predictable. We have the same thing every year, served at the same time, in the same way. First course – smoked salmon and/or melon and/or pate and/or prawn cocktail. Second course, turkey and all the trimmings (four types of potato are a must) and the pudding is raspberry pavlova. And that's the way I'd like it to stay.

My wife, being something of a re-

SUSAN
CALMAN AND
HER WIFE HAVE
DIFFERENT
IDEAS OF
THE PERFECT
CHRISTMAS

bel, said she would replace the turkey with a "Christmas fish". That's right. A fish. She even mentioned not having a turkey at all and, instead of a pavlova, having "a fruit salad". I asked why she didn't just punch my mum in the face instead.

Of course, I completely understand that what she wants more than anything is to start our own Christmas traditions. Ones that we share instead of those inherited from our parents. My problem is that the ones I've inherited feel comfortable and reassuring and to change them would have a seismic affect on me. For 40 years, 25 December has been the same, and to alter it would be like telling me I'd been called the wrong name for decades. We usually stop discussing the matter after she raises the possibility of the fruit salad. Then we look at the little reindeer on the mantelpiece for a while and don't speak. I'm fairly sure she's given up on her dream by now.

She's wrong to do so, because the truth is that I'd do anything that she wanted. Letting her cook a festive fish would make her happy and, without being a sad old romantic, that's all I need for my dream Christmas.

Don't tell her though. This is a brilliant test to see if she's actually been reading my columns. **D**

susan@divamag.co.uk

My wife
would like
to replace
the turkey
with a
"Christmas
fish".
That's right.
A fish



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If you don't know the name Deanz, you soon will. Small in stature but big on ambition, this young dancehall musician has more than enough talent to make her dreams come true and is determined to take over the world one track at a time.

Born in Brixton to Jamaican parents, Deanz grew up listening to R&B artists like Toni Braxton and R-Kelly. Surrounded by music from a young age, she cites her mum, a singer, as one of her biggest inspirations. She's also one of her biggest fans, despite her sexually explicit lyrics. "She knows I'm a big girl," laughs Deanz.

As well as her parents, Deanz is also inspired by some of the best-known dancehall artists, including Beanie Man and Vybz Kartel, many of whom have been criticised for their homophobic and misogynistic lyrics. But Deanz wants to make the genre accessible and remixes some of her favourite hits to make them more appealing to a lesbian and bisexual audience. "There's nobody else doing this in the world," she says.

The results are pretty impressive, winning Deanz fans from the LGBT and hip-hop communities alike. In particular, she's worked hard to "earn the respect" of male artists who don't think girls can compete with them in the dancehall and hip-hop genre. "Some people say lesbians can't do reggae music," says Deanz. "But when they listen to the lyrics that I give them, they're like, 'She's alright'. I'm trying to earn their respect and make them see we're just like them. We're all human."

So what does the future hold? With dreams of performing across the world as well as producing music for other artists, it's definitely bright and has Deanz's name written all over it. 📀

soundcloud.com/deanz4eva

MEET THE YOUNG MUSICIAN SET TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD



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More information on g7divadigital.co.uk

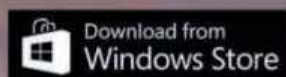


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And it's goodbye from her



It'll have been five years next month since I first held my breath and clicked "send" on an email to

DIVA's editor Jane. I was pitching her a column idea called The Rubbish Lesbian, not really expecting her to be interested, but to my great amazement, like a hotter female version of the man from Del Monte, she said, "Yes". The rest, as we say on the lesbian columnist circuit, is herstory.

I didn't realise it at the time, but the tectonic plates underlying my world were already starting to shift and this first tentative email exchange would be the start of new chapter in my life. I was going public about my sexuality and my insecurities, not just to my immediate friends and family but to DIVA's readership and beyond. For someone who had long struggled to utter those four little words "for my girlfriend, actually" to her local florist, this was going to be an eye-opener.

In the beginning I wrote about the awkwardness of coming out, about other people's assumptions about me, and of my own lack of confidence as a lesbian. My columns were a product of my own weekly experiences; if I accidentally broadcast a lesbian erotic audiobook at full volume to a crowded

AFTER FIVE YEARS, SARAH WESTWOOD IS OFF IN SEARCH OF A LIFE LESS RUBBISH

The truth is I'm not as rubbish as I once was, so it's time for me to hand back these column inches

Dixons, I'd relive every excruciating moment in my column the following week. Looking for the humour in such things was a way of dealing with them. Before long I began to receive supportive mails and tweets from people who were either not out or were having similar struggles with their sexual identity. They recognised themselves in my anecdotes and in turn shared their own rubbish stories. A community of Rubbish Lesbians was born, united by their inability to come out to their holiday rep and have sexy dreams about Angelina Jolie.

By the end of 2013, I had amassed about 80 columns, and decided to collect my favourites into a book, which was shortlisted for the Polari First Book Prize. I gave readings from the book at several Polari events, at Kenric (thanks, Anny Knight!), to the ladies of the Lesbian Reading Group at North Chingford Library, and in Gay's The Word bookshop. Hands down the oddest moment of these events involved Lip Service creator Harriet Braun and I having a very awkward discussion about scissoring on the altar of the Methodist church during the Archway With Words festival. Fortunately, no video footage of this reading survives.

Curiously the publication of the book marked a real sea change in my relationship with my family. They knew I had been doing the column, but until

the book came out they hadn't read any of them. My sister came to my first reading at Gay's The Word and cried, although in her defence she'd had a few wines beforehand. My mum rang to tell me that her hairdresser loved the book, and one night, trawling Amazon, I spotted a review by my "very proud" dad, in which he may or may not have invented the word "lesbianity".

The column and book have also led me to meet a great bunch of friends in the community, including the lovely Jim and Uli from Gay's The Word, Emma and Chris from Gaydio, Polari's Paul Burston and VG Lee, and Harriet, among others. And of course I've loved the tweets and messages I've had from DIVA readers over the years, and would like to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for all of your support. It's meant so much to me and been genuinely life changing in the best of ways.

I hope in return this column has given you a laugh from time to time, has made you consider getting a cat, or even made you feel less alone. The truth is I'm not as rubbish as I once was, so it's time for me to hand back these column inches and make way for some new and different voices.

I'd like to end by wishing you all a very merry Christmas. Go make the Yuletide as gay as possible, and let's all raise a festive toast to the Rubbish Lesbian in all of us. ☺

Scene Queens by Queen Josephine 2 Joy Joseph

I loved music from the start. Mum even started taking me to classical concerts at the Albert Hall when I was 3!

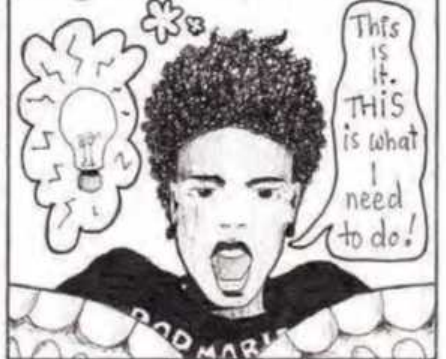
I wonder how old I need to be before we can stop wearing matching outfits...



When I got a bit older I sang in the church choir. I was rather obsessed by percussion too, so at 12 I joined a steel band (much to my mum's relief).



After finishing Performing Arts at college I taught steel pan in schools. But much as I loved it I wanted to be in the thick of things. So I joined my dad-British Calypsonian Alexander D Great-and his touring band. The stage was calling....



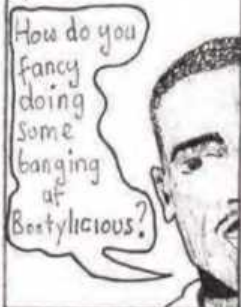
In 2001 some friends asked me to play percussion at Candy Bar, London. I took one conga on the number 24 bus to Soho....

You're not gonna charge me for this are you?



That same night DJ Chris McKay came in and he must've liked me! Residencies followed at Beyond, Trade, Fiction, Ari, Wet Pussy Party and of course....

How do you fancy doing some banging at Bootylicious?



In 2006 I had a life changing moment when I met Ben Hudson. Our 5 piece 'Mr Hudson and the Library' did the whole gig circuit and released the album 'A Tale of 2 Cities' on Universal. Later we just became 'Mr Hudson', but the excitement carried on....



By 2009 things had gone MAD! Our single Supernova, featuring Kanye West was a UK number 2 hit. And we supported some amazing, legendary artists....



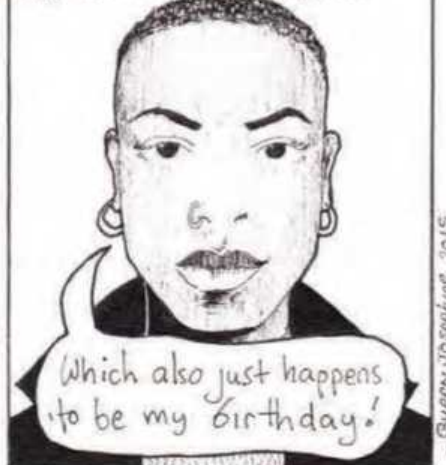
Me, my percussion, drum kits & voice have also managed to squeeze in festivals - Glastonbury, T in the Park, Lovebox etc, the MOBOs, radio including Zane Lowe, Jo Wiley & Tools Holland & TV, including a spot on the Alan Carr show....



Since then I've worked with other such artists as Duke Dumant, Kyla La Grange & Hot Chip offshoot New Build. And I'm currently out on tour with Mika....



I'm also about to release my 1st solo EP 'Who Am I' with the first single 'Lose My Mind' out on 23rd December....





PERSON OF THE MONTH

AJAX MBALI

As we approach International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it seems fitting to recognise the work of Ajax Mbali. The 21-year-old activist from South Africa works with Rainbow Activist Alliance, an ActionAid supported group, to empower black lesbian and bisexual women who have been the victims of discrimination, violent attacks and so-called "corrective rape". While South Africa has many legal protections for LGBT people, many aren't put into practice and violence is a day-to-day reality. It might seem like a bleak situation, but Mbali, who recently came to the UK to speak as part of the Fearless Women tour, is doing everything she can to change the situation, sitting on the National Task Team lobbying for hate crime legislation and fighting tirelessly for the rights of lesbian and bisexual women. But funding is scarce, and Mbali and others like her need our support to make sure their hard work can continue.

un.org/en/events/endviolenceday



WHAT WE'RE WEARING

OLD HARRY

If you're looking for something to keep you warm this winter, look no further than these beautiful unisex crewneck sweaters from Old Harry. Named after the rock stack that stands at the end of Studland Bay in Poole, Dorset, it's the attention to detail that makes this knitwear really stand out. They're not exactly cheap –

£65 each – but they're built to last, and once you slip one of these cosy creations over your head, you'll never want to take it off.

oldharry.com



CELEBRITY TWEETS

@MissyElliott

Always remember Be YOURSELF! That's what makes u fly! Because if u looking for the next new Missy u won't find her

@sueperkins

When I play the harmonica it's like I'm having an asthma attack in an ironmongers.

@ingridnlsen

Why do they put melon in fruit salads? Nobody wants that.

@Lavernecox

I am obsessed with this song. Hello @Adele. The pain and longing. Girl I know.

@vickybeecking

Taking a trip back to the Bible Belt – this time out of the closet & with a message about LGBT rights – feels good but a little scary too.

@SenatorWong

For how long will the hard right of the Liberal Party hold Turnbull and the country to ransom on #marriageequality

@lomorelli

I squeezed out too much lotion and there's no one here to take it so now I know what eternal loneliness feels like.

@UzoAduba

The 80's really seemed to love a nice saxophone solo.

A WORD FROM RUTH HUNT, CEO, STONEWALL CELEBRATING LBT WOMEN



We hosted the tenth and final Stonewall Awards this month – and it was an absolute delight to celebrate so many

fantastic lesbian, bi and trans women among our nominees; a group of people whose relentless work has helped us to progress equality for our community in countless ways throughout the last decade.

Politicians Ruth Davidson MSP and Lynne Featherstone, who, despite different party politics, have shared a tireless fight to progress equality in government.

Sarah Waters, Val McDermid and Stella Duffy, who have revolutionised the way that writing addresses LGBT themes, and Alicya Eyo, Jane Hazlegrove and Sue Perkins, whose nominations reflect their enormous contribution to increasing lesbian visibility on our screens. We also celebrated Martina Navratilova, for using her sporting platform to bring vital issues around diversity and equality to the table.

Liz Mackean and Miriam Stoppard were recognised for their impactful journalism, which has helped educate mainstream readers across Britain on LGBT issues here and overseas.

Our new Trans Media Award featured fantastic female talent – including Boy Meets Girl (starring Rebecca Root), Brace (co-directed by Alicya Eyo) and Orange Is The New Black, created by and starring a host of female talent including trans activist Laverne Cox. I want to thank these ladies for everything they've done over the decade. And the many, many more, who have helped change hearts and minds, empower individuals, transform institutions and change laws.

Here's to a year, and decade, of advances for LGBT equality. And to another year, and decade, of getting one step closer to acceptance without exception.



READER'S REVIEW

CROATIAN WINE: KRALJEVINA ZELINA

With initial subtle notes of apple, pineapple and gooseberry, this is a drinkable white with a very sociable 10.5% abv. If you're not fond of a dry wine this might be a bit ambitious for you. But one of the great things about this wine is that it really shows what Croatia has to offer, and further proves this country's worth on the wine-producing world stage. Have a taste and venture into the world of Croatian wine, you will not regret dipping your toes. Rating 3/5

Debs Baird

WE WERE THERE TIPPING THE VELVET @ LYRIC HAMMERSMITH

We had such a wonderful time at Tipping The Velvet, and not just because we were surrounded by sapphic sisters. Laura Wade's imaginative adaptation was superbly directed by Lyndsey Turner, and we think they did a fantastic job of bringing Sarah Waters' classic novel bang up to date. The best thing we've seen at the theatre for ages, Tipping The Velvet, which will be finishing its two-week run in Edinburgh as this issue goes on sale, is a must-see, and we think it definitely deserves a West End run, if only so we can hear that fantastic score again.



ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p7
divadigital.co.uk



“There are
brown ways
of being queer”

Raisa Kabir's work looks at the overlaps between gender and ethnic performativity. In *Visible Space*, her collection of photographs examining the QTPOC experience, was included in the GFEST group exhibition *Asian Future* at the Menier Gallery recently.

DIVA: How did *In/Visible Space* start off?

RAISA KABIR: I studied textiles at university and wrote my thesis on how South Asian queer women use clothes to construct their identities. At that time there really was nothing out there for us! There are so many different languages of queer. For example, in this project I talk to women who feel like "the outsider" if they enter a lesbian space wearing the hijab. I wanted to explore that extra layer of otherness in these photos.

In the exhibition you collate images together to form a montage. Can you explain your interest in montage as a technique?

For me, montage is a way of bridging photography and film and also a vehicle for storytelling. It's a way of capturing the moving moment.

There is a piece of text quoted alongside your work which reads: "And they looked at us both on the street, holding hands, they stopped and the car stalled, while we waited to cross... My queerness was erased, because you passed as a teenage boy, or she chose not to see you as a woman. And it was me who was shamed, who was shamed for holding a white boy's hand in public, shamed for being a brown girl with a white boy." Is there a story behind this story?

When you have multiple identities you are constantly being misread. You have no control over how others see you. Even if you are a person with short hair, wearing clothes that are traditionally "queer", if you have brown skin you are automatically read as heterosexual. On this occasion, my partner was misread as a white teenage boy. I was unaccepted by this particular brown audience because of being with "him"; my own identity, thus, was reduced

and I became the outsider. The pain and frustration of this type of experience travels with you wherever you go.

Your photographs look at the importance of safe spaces for QTPOC communities; can you talk a little about the process behind the work?

As a photographer I want to facilitate other people's stories. I built a rapport with the people in my pictures over the course of a year. To start I would ask, is there a space where you feel safe to be South Asian and queer at the same time? And if one didn't exist for that person, we set about creating it together. Every single photo sprang from the participant's own ideas about how they wanted to see themselves.

The set of photographs I found particularly moving were taken in a barber shop. Can you explain more about these?

Sita, one of the participants, wanted to disrupt the public, racialised, heterosexual space of a Pakistani barber shop in Whitechapel by placing her Indian, lesbian, masculine-of-centre identity within that space and recording the interaction. I think the resulting portrait is very important because it undermines the Islamophobic narrative that sustains the "homophobic brown man" trope.

Channel 4's documentary *Muslim Drag Queens* and BBC3's recent exposé *How Gay Is Pakistan* attest to a surge of interest in QTPOC lives. What are your thoughts on mainstream media?

A lot of the queer South Asian people in my community are weary of the media and especially the victimhood narrative that often accompanies documentaries and articles on QTPOC communities. I wouldn't sell these pieces because, for me, it's not about making money but reaching out to young people who are wondering how to talk to their families about being queer and a person of colour.

Does your work visualise intersectionality?

It's a snapshot. The work happens at

**RAISA KABIR
CREATES
PORTRAITS IN
WHICH HER
SUBJECTS CAN
EXPRESS THEIR
IDENTITIES ON
THEIR OWN
TERMS**

**WORDS DORA
MORTIMER**

an intersection between all these different identities and ages and gender presentations. People say queer Muslims don't exist. This is a lie. We do exist! We are visible. Not perhaps in the way that you would like us to be but in these quiet spaces, in these private spaces – and that's totally ok! There are brown ways of being queer.

Creative survival and radical activism seem to be a theme that the artists involved in *Asian Future* all share; how does your input reflect this?

I am invested in grassroots spaces. Space is hard won in London, particularly for a member of a marginalised community. The work began whilst I was studying at a very white, pretty racist university. I was the only person on my course looking at racial politics. I made the work in order to find other people like me! I made lots of lovely friends when I first moved to London and started going out on the gay scene. But there was always this tug, this isolation that was born out of racism. It was through this urgency that the work was made. Yes, it was do or die; it felt like if I didn't make that work I was going to die.

Do you envisage a particular audience for your work?

I've had lots of thank yous from younger South Asian and Bangladeshi queers. The fact that my parents felt able to engage with it really mattered to me. My mum even came up to me afterwards and said, "So there is quite a large queer Muslim community?" and I replied, "Yes, yes there is!"

After having spent a good year asking this question to others – where is the space Raisa Kabir feels most comfortable being South Asian and queer?

Ahh, it would be somewhere in Manchester, my hometown, in my house. My mother's kitchen maybe? Yes, it would be something to do with my family. **D**

In/Visible Space will be shown in Bangladesh in 2016. See images from the exhibition and learn more about Raisa's work at in-visible-space.co.uk and raisakabir.com.

**"People
say queer
Muslims
don't exist.
This is a
lie. We do
exist!"**



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ESSENTIAL SYNTH-POP:

JOHN GRANT*Grey Tickles, Black Pressure
(Bella Union)*

John Grant's third album demonstrates why he's widely considered one of our finest queer songwriters. An ambitious affair, GTBP captures the pleasures and perils of mid-life crisis with playful humour. Some songs feature Grant crooning dramatically over orchestral strings and piano, whilst others break into flamboyant pop with icy beats and fizzy synths. Swoonsome.

FOXTROTT*A Taller Us (One Little Indian)*

Essential listening for Glasser and Fever Ray fans, A Taller Us is the delicious debut album by Montreal solo artist and producer Foxtrott. An incredibly catchy affair, all 11 songs marry her original beats and intricate synths with warm melodies, gorgeous percussion and sublime, multi-layered vocals. Play loud and surrender.

DOWNLOAD THIS:

SON LITTLE*Son Little (Anti)*

Praised by Mavis Staples, Son Little's debut is a gloriously eclectic affair that mashes R&B, gospel and soul with rock and blues. One minute he's crooning intimate ballads like Your Love and Lay Me Down, the next he's hollering and moaning over blistering guitars, stomping riffs and finger-snapping grooves.

IF YOU LIKE SOUL:

SHARON JONES & THE DAP KINGS*It's A Holiday Soul Party (Daptone)*

Looking for a Christmas record with soul? Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings breathe new life into classics like White Christmas with gospel vocals and slide guitar. Elsewhere, layer saxophone, organ and soulful grooves enhance fine vocals on originals like Ain't No Chimneys in The Projects. Joyful.

SIS



My dark girl: Sexwitch

SEXWITCH*Sexwitch (Echo)*

A collaboration between Bat For Lashes, Toy and producer Dan Carey, Sexwitch's debut features covers of six Middle Eastern and Far Eastern songs. Recorded live, it's a deeply hypnotic affair that captures Natasha Khan singing and chanting over spirals of taut percussion, drums and guitar. Each song has warm, trancelike grooves but it's Helelyos, with its repetitive chorus "my dark girls", that should have you dancing wildly.

**OLGA BELL***Incitation (One Little Indian)*

Russian-American composer Olga Bell follows up her acclaimed debut Krai with this ace mini-album. Drawing on her love of electronica, Incitation and Pounder II create a storm of muscular beats, skittering drum machine and synths, whilst Goalie and Rubberneck layer her rich vocals over slow, beautifully composed piano and beats.

**ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF***The Miraculous (City Slang)*

Like Zola Jesus, Anna Von Hausswolff makes arresting albums that fuse musique concrete with rock and funereal pop. Inspired by a momentous uprising in Swedish history, The Miraculous features nine songs that weave Ann's distinctive vocals between dramatic guitar, powerful melodies, brooding drones and towering pipe organ.

**JANE WEAVER***I Need A Connection*

Jane Weaver's most blissful single to date, Connection is all shimmering synths, krautrock beats and lush, featherweight vocals.

**2001***Broke Me In Two*

BLD and Joan As Police Woman team up for this cool number with low-slung beats, staccato guitar and fab, shuffling vocals.

**DAUGHTER***Doing The Right Thing*

Indie trio Daughter returns with another masterful single that features Elana singing over slow-burning guitars and a dark pop melody.

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in Covent Garden, London
on the 19th of September, 2015

GRANDMA

Dir Paul Weitz



Based on my Netflix options, I might be forgiven for thinking the definition of a strong female character involved a leather jacket and a gun. Luckily, Paul Weitz decided the big screen needed a 75-year-old lesbian feminist with a sensible take on women's reproductive rights in a central role. When Sage (Julia Garner) asks her grandma Elle (Lily Tomlin) to help her find \$600 for an abortion, she gets a lesson in female solidarity, male selfishness, America's bizarre healthcare system and its confusing relationship with money. Elle's faulty relationship with her girlfriend (Judy Greer) is underexplored, but this smart, funny film offers a much-needed riposte to Juno.

In cinemas 11 December

MY SKINNY SISTER

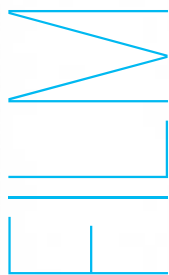
Dir Sanna Lenken



Katja's little sister Stella knows her better than anyone else. But she's too young to understand why Katja's deceiving their parents, or why she's started to hate her body – and Stella's, too. Sanna Lenken's debut skilfully conjures up the soft-focus girlhood world in which Stella's fairy-princess older sister is turning into a terrifying witch. Amy Deasismont is compelling as a teenage figure skater with a savage eating disorder, while Rebecka Josephson is brilliantly cast as 12-year-old Stella, dealing optimistically with her dysfunctional family, inappropriate first crush, and the unfair rules of her impending womanhood.

In cinemas 27 November

ONLINE



Exquisite chemistry: Rooney Mara and Cate Blanchett star in Carol

CAROL

Dir Todd Haynes

Patricia Highsmith's books were first adapted for the screen in the 1950s, notably by Alfred Hitchcock, but we've waited a long time for a film of her noirish novel about a lesbian romance. The big guns have come out to do it: longtime queer favourite Todd Haynes brings the work's powerful emotion into dreamy focus, while Cate Blanchett is all throaty-voiced elegance and thoughtful depth as Carol. There's exquisite chemistry between Blanchett and Rooney Mara, the perfect choice for Highsmith's strange, waiflike protagonist. Phyllis Nagy's script piles on the tension and heightens our understanding of the forces allied against Carol.

In cinemas 27 November

STREAM THIS MONTH WINTER'S LESBIAN/ BI ROM COMS

Pour yourself a glass of red and settle in for some seasonal escapism. In Seeking Dolly Parton, Charlie (Kacey Barnfield) and Cerina (Anya Monzikova) ask Cerina's ex-boyfriend to help them have a baby. In Spanish comedy Liz In September, party girl Liz (played by lesbian super-model Patricia Velasquez) decides to seduce bi-curious Eva.

Watch Seeking Dolly Parton at vimeo.com/ondemand/seekingdollyparton

Watch Liz In September at wolfeondemand.com

INVESTIGATING HOMOPHOBIC LANGUAGE THE GAY WORD

Why do so many British people use the word gay in a negative way? Young filmmaker Amy Ashenden asks who's doing it, if it's funny or hurtful, and whether slang is simply evolving. Through vox pops and interviews she builds up a surprisingly complex picture of the current "state of gay".

Find out more and watch online at thegayworddoc.com

DOCUMENTING LESBIAN STORIES CROC-A-DYKE DUNDEE

Dawn O'Donnell was said to be the godmother of Sydney's gay scene. Director Fiona Cunningham-Reid explores a personal mythology encompassing figure skating, mafia mates and alleged pyromania. This double DVD also includes Wine, Women And Friends, following Carole and Jo as they set out to produce their own fine wine.

Buy the DVD at peccapics.com/dvd

ONLINE

ADVICE

THE OTHER TEAM

Brilliant site dedicated to giving advice and empowering lesbian and bi women with fun content on topics including lifestyle, dating and relationships.

theotherteam.com

HUMOUR

HAIRCUT GUIDE

Our friends at AfterEllen have compiled a scarily accurate list of hairstyles worn by queer women everywhere. Which ones can you tick off?

tinyurl.com/lesbianhaircutguide

FASHION

FUCK YEAH LEZ FASHION

We love this stylish blog highlighting the best in queer fashion and helping us find our own style without bullshit heteronormative beauty standards.

fuckyeahlezfashion.tumblr.com

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ON THE WEB
COUPLE-ISH



We're super-duper mega excited about this new webseries, about dates, mates and tricking the government, from Camilla stars and real life BFFs

Kaitlyn Alexander and Sharon Belle. With truly diverse characters and funny as hell scripts, we think this is going to be a winner.

YouTube, 9 December

BINGE THIS
MASTER OF NONE



If you're struggling with the Parks and Recreation-sized hole in your heart, then you need to fill it with Master Of None. This criminally funny Netflix original, based on Aziz Ansari's book Modern Romance, is a fantastic comedy about life and dating in the 21st century that will have you thanking your lucky stars you paid that £6 a month for your Netflix subscription.

CATCH UP
UNFORGOTTEN



If you missed ITV's stunning six-part crime drama starring Last Tango's Nicola Walker, do yourself a favour and catch up now. Absorbing, believable and without the clichés we're so used to in other cop shows, this is the best thing ITV have done in ages.

Available now on ITV Player

NOVELS

Family values:
Transparent's ensemble
cast has us hooked



PICK
OF THE
MONTH

TRANSPARENT

The wait has been agonising, but season two of arguably the most revolutionary show of the 21st century is now within touching distance. The Amazon Original series, written by Jill Soloway (Six Feet Under, United States of Tara), earned Jeffrey Tambor a Golden Globe for his sensitive portrayal of trans woman Maura Pfefferman, as well as a whole host of other gongs – and no wonder. As well as being warm, sophisticated and thought-provoking, Transparent is also stingingly funny. Now what are you waiting for? Go renew that Amazon Prime membership now.

Prime Video, 11 December



WHAT WE'RE WATCHING
JESSICA JONES

If Carrie-Anne Moss playing lesbian lawyer Jeryn Hogarth isn't enough to get you tuning in to this one, then frankly you're a lost cause. Just kidding... kind of. Following on from Daredevil, Marvel fans will delight in getting to know more about little-known ex-superhero Jessica Jones in this atmospheric 13-part series. But even if you're not an expert on comics, you'll find something to love in this gripping new series – not least the sexual tension between the Matrix star and Krysten Ritter. Get watching.

Netflix, 20 November



WE LOVE
THE BRIDGE

Attention, Nordic noir fans. The brilliant Saga Norén is returning to UK screens for season three of critically acclaimed thriller The Bridge, and we can't wait to catch up with our favourite Swedish detective, played by the watchable Sofia Helin. The drama, which has more viewers than both Borgen and The Killing, will have you glued to your seat this season as Saga and her new partner Henrik try to get to the bottom of the murder of a lesbian found on a construction site in Malmö.

BBC4, 21 November, 9pm



MEMOIR

HUNGER MAKES ME A MODERN GIRL

Carrie Brownstein

Full of self-analysis and passages of candid disclosure, Carrie Brownstein's memoir tells the story of her journey from young music fan to founding member of pioneering feminist punk-rock band Sleater-Kinney, once described by notable music critic Greil Marcus as America's best rock band. Not coincidentally, it also tells the story of Brownstein's experiences of loneliness

and detachment and her path towards a life of creativity and connection. Fans of the newly-reformed band will find lots to enjoy in Brownstein's recollections of the early days, of life on tour, the (lack of) groupies, the recording of albums, her musical influences, relationships with bandmates Janet and Corin (the latter Brownstein dated for a time), and her thoughts on sexual and gender identity. Fans of Portlandia, however, will rue that her satirical sketch show is skimmed over. Despite some past experiences she found gruelling and sad, Brownstein's future seems full of creativity and hope.

Virago, £16.99



FICTION

A GHOST'S STORY

Lorna Gibb

A fictionalised autobiography of a 19th century celebrity ghost? Sure, why not. Gibb's metafictional novel follows the afterlife of spirit Katie King, who manifests as both male and female and is no stranger to Victorian séances. Fans of Susan Hill and Sarah Waters' *Affinity*, take note. (See p68 for article.)

Granta, £12.99



MEMOIR

MY LIFE ON THE ROAD

Gloria Steinem

Pack your rainbow rucksack and join iconic feminist campaigner, Ms magazine founder and "modern nomad" Gloria Steinem on a beautifully written tour of her eventful life and career, taking early road trips with her father, social activism in India, and Hillary Clinton's campaign trail. Inspirational.

Oneworld, £14.99



GRAPHIC NOVEL

SNAPSHOTS OF A GIRL

Beldan Sezen

Graphic novelist Sezen, a German-Turkish immigrant, is her own subject in this funny and revealing coming out story. Simple sketches illustrate various scenes, many of which recount responses to her homosexuality from friends within mainstream German society and the Islamic subculture she also inhabits.

Arsenal Pulp Press, £12.99



ESSAYS

I CALL MYSELF A FEMINIST

Eds Pepe, Holmes, et al

Wondering what young feminist activists are thinking about these

days? These essays from 25 feminist women under 30 give voice to interests spanning a range of issues including work, body image, trans rights, personal safety, sex, race, religion and ethnicity.

Virago, £13.99



CRIME FICTION

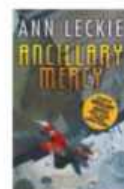
THE SILENT ROOM

Mari Hannah

Suspected of helping his former boss escape police custody, DS Matthew

Ryan becomes a fugitive in this pacy and typically assured standalone thriller from prolific Polari Prize-winner Mari Hannah, whose Kate Daniels series has made her more than a few LGBT fans.

Macmillan, £12.99, eBook £8.99



SCI-FI

ANCILLARY MERCY

Ann Leckie

Science fiction fans who haven't yet discovered this award-winning series may

want to track down books one and two before delving into the final book of US author Leckie's space opera trilogy set in a militarised world where gender is not recognised.

Orbit Books, £8.99



THEATRE

THE ONLY WAY HOME IS THROUGH THE SHOW

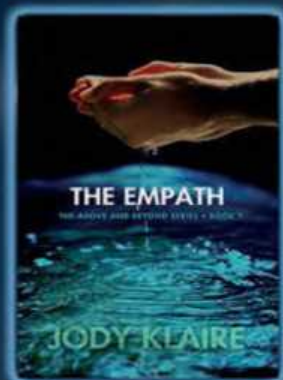
Eds Jen Harvie, Lois Weaver

Take a tour through the extensive archives of lesbian feminist performance pioneer Lois Weaver, featuring her hyper-femme persona Tammy WhyNot and collaborations with Split Britches and much more. A bright slice of queer history, full of great photos, poems, and recollections. LADA, Intellect Books, £24.50

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

*'Fast paced, sharp and very, very smart.
... promises to be a smash hit of a series.'*

SHE Magazine



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(Honourable Mention)

Finalist
GCLS Goldie Awards 2015
(Debut Author)

'...A born storyteller.'

Rainbow Awards 2014



Honourable Mention
Rainbow Awards 2015

*'...When I finished,
I wished I had my own Aeron.'*

Rainbow Awards 2015

Romance



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<http://jodyklaire.wordpress.com>

Tourist

The first time I was spooned by another woman I could not sleep. I was used to the contours of men: their length and strength, their flatness and hardness. Instead curled around me was a body even smaller than my own; soft breasts pressed against my narrow back. Even the room smelled different, the intense pheromones of masculinity replaced by a cloud of oestrogen with a top note of Chanel No 5. I felt the way travellers do as they try to sleep on their first night in a new place: disorientated and disturbed; the sounds and smells unfamiliar; the sensations unnervingly foreign.

As I lay there, eyes wide open, I went over and over the preceding seduction, in which I was entirely complicit. Meeting the woman I shall call Carla, a petite redhead with a fashionable pixie cut; getting to know her, both of us subtly fanning the burgeoning spark of interest that we shared; everything finally coming together on this evening, the setting a fashionable new restaurant in Chelsea, the dramatis personae two women in their early thirties, one black the other white, heads leaning in towards the other, a certain self-consciousness initially but the conversation flowing, the unmistakable body language of a connection being forged.

We continued to talk for hours in a state of increasing captivation until only the waiters were left, and made our way into the cool summer night, the joint cab ride to her place now a foregone conclusion. When we got back to her flat she made me wait at the door for a moment, until I was ushered into a bedroom, where I was confronted by the classic *mise en scène* of amour: a bed, wide and low; a long mirror on a big wooden dresser



IN AN ESSAY
PUBLISHED
IN GRANTA
MAGAZINE,
ANDREA
STUART
REMEMBERS
HER FIRST
SEXUAL
EXPERIENCE
WITH A
WOMAN

and candles, candles everywhere. When we kissed our mouths tasted of wine. Though I had dabbled with a few other girls, as so many heterosexual women did in order to appear cool and alternative, she was the first “real” lesbian I had ever slept with and I was almost frightened.

When I left her bed the following morning and walked out onto the south London streets, I bristled with a curious paranoia. I felt that everyone who passed me could see last night shimmering on my skin. In particular I examined men’s gazes, as most young heterosexual women habitually do, watching myself being watched, wondering whether I was still wanted, although I had betrayed them, and broken the contract of desire I shared with them. And in my traitor’s heart I felt both shame and triumph at my conduct. Shame because I was a deviant, and triumph because I had got away with it.

How did I end up in this sapphic tryst? Me, perhaps the most avid heterosexual in the world, a girl whose mother dubbed her “boy crazy” as a teen; a girl who had her first boyfriend at eleven and never looked back? From my earliest adolescence, males were my hobby, and my female friends and I did little else but talk and speculate about them. Every interaction with the opposite sex was dissected; every nuance of their behaviour weighed and measured. I was so immersed in this pursuit, so utterly intoxicated with it, that I was only a little shocked – and secretly rather pleased – when my university lecturer suggested my most suitable future career would be that of a courtesan.

I can’t really explain my apparent volte-face. Or rather, there are many

explanations: some competing, some complementary, all ultimately unsatisfactory. There was, for example, the predictable backstory of heterosexual heartbreak. The long-term boyfriend that I had met at university and loved madly if not well, who had left me after nearly ten years, breaking my heart into a million weeping pieces, and replacing me with a woman who was my *doppelgänger*. The depression that followed flattened me like a tsunami. When I finally admitted to my therapist that I was involved in a lesbian relationship, she diagnosed me as being “in manic flight from heterosexuality”, proving how simultaneously accurate and irrelevant therapy can be.

My friends concurred with my therapist. Surely my interest in women could only be explained by the break-up. Clearly I was hurt, in retreat from the dangers of the heterosexual romantic battlefield. To most of them, women were a safe, almost chaste, choice. People frequently make this assumption: that being with a woman is “easier”, less intense, like having a best friend that you sleep with. They equate romance with emotional turbulence, and emotional turbulence with the difference and threat represented by men. They cannot imagine that a woman can tear another woman’s heart and soul into shreds.

I was scarred by love. But who among us is not? And the truth was that by then I had had a couple of years to recover, with a few enjoyable affairs with men under my belt. The bruises had healed, as much as psychic ones do, and I was back out there. But my return to the heterosexual arena was disappointing. I couldn’t get over the feeling that I had been there and

done that. It all felt a bit lacklustre. After hearing the same old lines, and playing the same old games, I was, I realised, bored.

The idea that our sexual predilections might turn on such a shallow thing as boredom is almost a heresy. Especially as “born that way” has been a central tenet of the gay rights movement in the West. Surely, the campaign strategy asserts, we are born with certain things fixed in place, our sexuality as immutable as our race and therefore equally underserving of hostility. And indeed, the evidence seems to be stacking up that this may be broadly true for men. But not for women. And for this woman, at least, I seemed both turnable and ready to be turned. I craved something different, something new. I felt like a jaded traveller searching for a new destination; I wanted to explore customs and cultures different from my own.

Looking back, I realise I had always been bi-curious. I had vague crushes on girls as well as boys in my early teens but none that were so intense that a whiff of disapproval could not dispel them; I transferred my interest exclusively to boys with no discernible sense of grief and with great alacrity. I was always fascinated by alternative lives, however. As a voracious teen reader I was beguiled by books like Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well Of Loneliness* and Edmund White’s *A Boy’s Own Story*, which explored the drama of being a sexual outcast: those forced to lead a hidden life. I was also drawn to the burgeoning struggle for lesbian and gay rights. Despite the pervasive homophobic climate of my youth, in both London and the Caribbean, I didn’t understand why an alternative

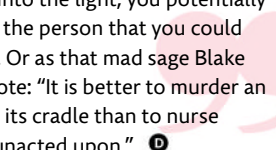
sexual preference should be a source of shame. Later I read Freud and was convinced by his theory that bisexuality was the norm, and monosexuality the product of social conditioning; to put it another way, that all infants are born into a state of sexual fluidity, requiring shaping by sociocultural forces in order to assume conventional gender roles.

It wasn’t just sexual autonomy I craved, but intellectual freedom. I was an ardent feminist, it was the nineties and third-wave feminism was blowing across the cultural landscape like a fresh wind. And I was utterly transfixed by the pleasure-loving, sex-positive model of feminism that the third-wavers espoused. I dreamed of being a writer, and was looking for a way to lead a free life: that, for me, meant a creative life that allowed me to pursue my intellectual ambitions. I was in flight from domesticity too, trying to work out how not to take on the conventional role of someone’s mother and someone’s wife. Even more than this I did not want to lead a life “predicated on the threat and promise of men” as Toni Morrison wrote in her novel, *A Mercy*. I wanted to possess what the novelist Colette called a “virile femininity”, to combine my dresses and heels with independence and autonomy: a woman in control of her own body, who pursued her own ambitions, and was the captain of her own life.

I particularly resented the sexual restrictions put upon women. Whereas men were expected to define themselves through their interactions with the outside world as well as the active exploration of their sexuality, women always had to weigh up their daring desires against the mores of social

decorum. A roguish man who displays a restless drive to overcome individual limitations, confront danger and explore the world, as well as enjoy a certain amount of sexual meandering, is tolerated, even admired in our society: a similar woman is still branded a slut. So my curiosity about lesbianism was an accomplice of my feminism: a path that allowed me to be sexual and free.

I was a passionate rebel against women’s lot, full of aspirations and fantasies, fearful of being trapped in roles that I felt were not of my own making – the “good” woman, the domestic goddess, the dutiful wife – and eager to express my aspirations for female freedom. I was inspired by intellectuals and artists, performers and outlaws: those women who escaped the destiny to which their gender had consigned them. I had a restless craving for change, love and motion. My dreams were born of women’s repressed wildness, their craving for adventure and a profound longing to transcend the complex limitations that govern our lives.

Whatever the commingling of reasons which meant I finally opened this new door, I came to believe that if you do not allow your longings to emerge into the light, you potentially sacrifice the person that you could become. Or as that mad sage Blake once wrote: “It is better to murder an infant in its cradle than to nurse desires unacted upon.” 

This is an extract from Andrea Stuart’s *Tourist* which featured in *Granta* magazine’s *Fate* issue, priced £12.99. It is available by subscription or in all good bookshops and online. Andrea will be reading from *Tourist* on 7 December at Polari at London’s Southbank. For more details visit: polariliterarysalon.co.uk.



B E I N G BAHAR

Bahar Mustafa is not the misandric monster the right wing press make her out to be. The Goldsmiths Students' Union welfare and diversity officer, who found herself the subject of a media feeding frenzy for a throwaway tweet, is shy and unassuming. But she's also unapologetic, despite receiving a court summons for "sending a communication with a threatening message" and "sending a grossly offensive message via a public communication network". While the charges were dropped days before she was due in court, they've deeply affected her, and she's angry.

"It's easier to attack an individual and defame her character – especially if she is a woman of colour with a Muslim name – than it is to challenge the ideology and political movement she represents," she says.

The 28-year-old has received numerous accusations of racism and hundreds of rape and death threats since her tweet in May, but she's not backing down. "It's been challenging," she admits. "But I'm a stubborn bitch and have spent most of my life fighting for what I believe in, and I ain't about to stop now."

It all began when Mustafa was asked by BME women and non-binary students to host a meeting to discuss issues affecting them on campus. In order to ensure a safe space, she asked that white cisgender men not attend. "This is what sparked the public outrage, and I became the centre of a media storm that lasted several months," she explains. "They tried to make it out to be about the way I worded the invite to the meeting, but ultimately, I and many other activists believe it was really just that white supremacist capitalist patriarchy can't deal with any collective movement that attempts to challenge their power or class status. Ultimately it comes down to this: I was doing all the things I was elected to do, and it was effective, which is why the right wing media used me as a scapegoat."

But it was when she tweeted #KillAllWhiteMen that all hell broke loose. Whatever your thoughts about the hashtag, it certainly didn't warrant the vitriol that came Mustafa's way. "I've been the victim of rape and sexual and familial violence, I grew up with violence, and yet for months while this non-story was gaining national and international press coverage, I was genuinely frightened for my life," she says. "I couldn't walk in broad daylight on my own. Because I understand what a threat made against my life is, because it's

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BEHIND THE
HEADLINES

WORDS CARRIE LYELL

"I've spent most of my life fighting for what I believe in, and I ain't about to stop now"

happened to me before with visceral consequences."

As well as accusations of racism and threats against her life, Mustafa was also accused of sexism. How did that feel? "I didn't really take it seriously because the accusations were mostly coming from white men who don't understand structural oppression, theoretically or through experience. Also, my best friends are white men, so..." she laughs. Joking aside, she says: "People who are at the receiving end of institutional/structural racism or sexism as a result of those who benefit from those structures – white, wealthy, cis, hetero men – cannot then be racist or sexist to those aforementioned white wealthy cis hetero men because we do not stand to benefit from this system."

Despite it all, Mustafa remains defiant. She says the outpouring of support and solidarity from the LGBT and BME communities has given her strength, and she will continue to fight for what she believes in. "Despite everything, despite feeling like quitting not just this position but life, I will defend to the death spaces for the most marginalised people. I will continue to fight with and for the rights of women, queers, people of colour, working class, minority genders, disabled people, sex workers... so that one day we might achieve liberation." **D**



HOME girl

Manchester's much-loved arts hub Cornerhouse is no more, but a new cultural Mecca, HOME, has risen from the ashes. At its helm, with the title of Artistic Director: Visual Art, is northern powerhouse Sarah Perks, 37. DIVA found out more.

DIVA: What's your earliest memory of art in a public setting, like a museum or gallery, Sarah?

SARAH PERKS: As youngster, I was obsessed with foreign language cinema, I loved the different ways of telling stories. I sort of grew up in Cornerhouse; I went to the theatre and art galleries, and then bars, gigs and clubs. Culture from low to high has always felt really important to me, particularly how it affects the way we understand the world and talk about it. Art for me is very political and international, yet it has to have an emotional impact and have space within it for people to react. Contemporary visual art has a free spirit and integrity I've yet to experience in any other art form, it mutates, evolves and affects everything around it.

When did you know that you wanted to work in the art world and how did you get your first toe on the ladder?

Despite all the obvious pointers towards being a producer or curator, I spent the ages of three to 21 convinced I would be an indie pop star. At some point I realised I didn't have the time to waste, and set out to be an academic instead. Everything changed when I got a job at Cornerhouse aged 24.

What is the difference between people who want to make art and people who want to curate? Did you ever think you might be an artist yourself?

I didn't even take art at school as I hated drawing tins and cereal boxes. Think what fun we might have had with conceptual art class! I'm not a traditional curator and never worked in a museum, so I hands-on produce artwork with my artists and feel my approach blurs conventional roles and art forms. I dislike the way people tend to see things as either creative or practical or academic, the genius is in the blurring of these things. I'm sat right now on a film shoot where I'm producer, caterer, writer, driver, wardrobe and art director, whilst preparing for a book launch tonight.

Obviously your role at HOME has a creative element to it. Tell us about your job and what it involves...

One way to describe it is juggling lots of small to large scale art projects – one primary focus for me is curating the exhibitions (four or five a year) for our major gallery space. Each one will involve research and defining the concept, then a combination of producing new work alongside existing work. Alongside this curating runs creative writing, artist publications, film productions, training programmes, events, performances, conferences and everything that is a part of HOME.

What do you have to think about when you are planning an exhibition?

There's a lot to consider, I look at three year periods broken down into themes and research to begin with. I look at the diversity of the artists I'm presenting and crucially whether they are "our" type of artists – for example, HOME wouldn't do a major solo exhibition by an already very established artist that you can see elsewhere. I'm very much led by thinking international and cross art form, explorations of the personal and political, often revealed via storytelling. For group shows I take an influential text as inspiration,

CURATOR
SARAH PERKS
HATED ART
AT SCHOOL.
NOW SHE'S
HEADING
UP HOME,
MANCHESTER'S NEW
CULTURAL
MECCA

INTERVIEW
LOUISE CAROLIN

"I'm not a traditional curator. My approach blurs roles and art forms"

a pop culture reference or a historical movement to revisit. Start with something narrow and explore from centre outwards. Also, I'm tracking artists careers over time and always on the lookout for new and exciting artwork from anywhere.

Tell us about your current exhibition, Safe...

Safe is an excellent example of an exhibition developing over time, as a collaboration. At the heart of it all is Todd Haynes' seminal film *Safe* (1995) starring Julianne Moore as a LA suburban housewife who becomes gradually allergic to everything around her. It's a very complex and unresolved film exploring environmental illness and pollution, self help, suburban malaise, and often viewed as an allegory for HIV/AIDS. Conceiving and producing with my co-curator Louise O'Hare has been an epic journey and I think it is a deeply resonant, timely and accessible exhibition – half of which is new commissions, with a publication in the style of self help alongside.

Sounds fantastic! What else have you got in the pipeline?

Our next exhibition is by super cool artist and filmmaker duo AL & AL, who will present and narrate *Incidents Of Travel In The Multiverse* (6 Feb - 27 Mar 2016), a major new solo show conceived from their epic sci-fi odyssey, both real and imagined, alongside some of the world's ground-breaking scientists, Professor Brian Greene, Alan Turing and Dr Bart Hoogenboom. And there will be a live concert performance with the BBC Philharmonic and music by Philip Glass. I have two weeks to write some very interesting semi-autobiographical science reports for a publication which will accompany the exhibition!

Following that, next year has major solo exhibitions by US artist Judith Barry, Scottish artist Rachel Maclean and every year we have a major VIVA! Festival of everything Spanish and Latin American. I'm looking forward to how HOME develops generally, in one way it's still in its infancy and hopefully we can really push what it can become in the future.

Manchester is well-known for its well-established LGBT community as well as being a destination for LGBT visitors, and HOME is just a stone's throw from the Gay Village. What will HOME offer LGBT visitors?

As with other more easy to define audience groups, HOME offers specific interest events, for example, an LGBT film season, but also does not make assumptions of where interests lie. An LGBT visitor could be interested in anything, however I appreciate the atmosphere has to be welcoming and the general programme is diverse and avoids lazy stereotypes. We're much too counter-culture by nature – individually and as Mancunians – to promote homogenistic "normalised" views of the world.


Working in the art world, has being a gay woman ever felt like an advantage or a disadvantage?

I've noticed absolutely no difference being gay or straight, and I don't believe being a woman is a disadvantage. I don't give any time or credit to people who treat others differently, I have experienced class and age being more of a disadvantage, but always only by stupid people.

You obviously live a busy life – what do you do to kick back in your spare time?

A lot of my social life is connected to the arts, of course, and I've made a lot of close friends through work. The social side is addictive and I've met such a wide range of amazing and talented people over the years. After work, I'm equally happy to be in HOME's bar or watch TV at my real home with my girlfriend.

We hear you have a parallel existence as DJ Britney \$perks, too.

Infrequently, I DJ at art parties or friends' occasions under this pseudonym! I play an eclectic range of popular music that people can dance to, only using my laptop or phone, hence this name. I feel it's important to have a backup career. 

Safe is at HOME until 3 January 2016.

homemcr.org



FORGOTTEN QUEER MOMENTS


"By looking at forgotten or disavowed queer moments, affects, acts, or leftovers, we not only want to (re)consider them as political interventions, but also try to re-create the past in order to articulate a contemporary desire," explain the artists Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, who have been working together in Berlin since 2007.

"Our works often revisit materials from the past – a score, a piece of music, a film, a photograph or a performance – wondering about and excavating un-represented or illegible moments," they continue. "We work with performance to create embodiments, which are able to conflate different times, drawing relations between these times" – a pro-

PAULINE BOUDRY AND RENATE LORENZ ARE PART OF A GROUP EXHIBITION IN NOTTINGHAM
WORDS ANNA MCNAY

cess they refer to as "temporal drag".

The duo's performances take place very much for the camera, often explicitly acknowledged by the performer. There is no attempt to convince viewers that the performers have become anyone else – it is much more about their interaction and connection with the historical objects and becoming, as Boudry puts it, a moving photograph.

Boudry and Lorenz's films are often very fragmentary, with the music abruptly edited, underlining the duo's artistic direction. The performances raise questions about the meaning of visibility, bodily pathologisation, glamour, resistance and the very nature of performance itself. 

Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz
In Memoriam To Identity
Part of Autumn Season: Alien Encounters
Until 31 December 2015
Nottingham Contemporary,
nottinghamcontemporary.org

Above:

OPAQUE, 2014.

Installation with super 16mm / HD,
10 min. Performance, Ginger Brooks
Takahashi, Werner Hirsch.

Opposite:

PAULINE BOUDRY & RENATE LORENZ, I WANT, 2015.

Courtesy of the artists, Marcelle Alix
and Ellen de Bruin Projects.



Diva's CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

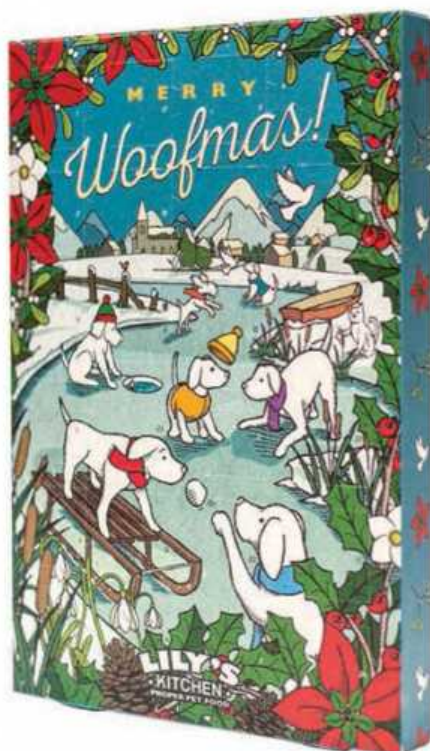
STILL SEARCHING FOR THE PERFECT PRESENT FOR SOMEONE SPECIAL?
 WISH YOUR MONEY WAS GOING TO LGBT MAKERS AND ENTREPRENEURS?
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Why we love it
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COMPILED BY DANIELLE BURTON, LOUISE CAROLIN, JANE CZYZSELSKA

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JACK MONROE



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Jack Monroe is an activist and cook who is passionate about making good food on a budget. Their first book is packed with cheap and easy recipes, perfect for anyone wanting to learn how to cook – help someone say bye to the takeaway menu and hi to the saucepan.

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for the FOODIES

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Why we love it

10% of Shoshana's profits are donated to the Albert Kennedy Trust which supports young LGBT people who have been made homeless or are living in hostile environments.



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pretypinkpearl.co.uk/Alex+Vause+is+my+homegirl

For the
STYLISH

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This niche market company offers an amazing choice of bespoke, handmade suits and coats for all occasions. It's worth noting that the company makes suits for all gay women, not just the butches.

Stylish bespoke suits and winter coats start from £950. Bespoke shirts perfect for any occasion £175. Also check out the platinum ore cuff links £35, silk ties, bow ties and cravats £50

thebutchclothingcompany.co.uk





Why we love it

First published in 2001, this image has haunted a million women's imaginations ever since.

KISS POSTER BY TANYA CHALKIN

A chance to get your mitts on an iconic lesbian image – photographer Tanya Chalkin will even add a personalised message on request!

£140 | tanyachalkin.com

Why we love it

Meet Hanna in person at the Wotever Queer Fayre Xmas Market on 5 Dec. See Diary p96-97 for details..

A LINO PRINT FROM HANNA'S PRINTS

Hanna Demel is an all-round crafty fox, whose full range of knitted finger-puppets and animal lavender bags is available via her Facebook page, Hanna's Stuff. But if you're in the market for art, check out the fine, atmospheric lino prints on her website.

£30-£35 | hannasprints.moonfruit.com

Why we love it

This poster, printed on archival fine art paper, is what your fine art collection is missing.



ROMAN MANFREDI: I WISH I DIDN'T LOVE YOU (BY NIGHT)

Manfredi's work *I Wish I Didn't Love You...* is inspired by a subtitle from Michelangelo Antonioni's film *The Eclipse* (L'Eclisse, 1962). Reproduced here as a giclée print poster, the work utilises cultural reference points such as signage, early European cinema and car fetishism. Underlying themes of loss and desire are re-interpreted in a contemporary context by merging distinctive cultural cues.

£35 including postage (UK) Last mailing day for Christmas Friday 18 December
romanmanfredi.com





Why we love it

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CATHY STOCKER

A visual artist working and living in Wales, Stocker's portfolio contains works of landscape, portrait, still life and life drawing, using pencil, watercolours and oils.

Various; see website or email for details.

Cathystocker.com

For the
ART LOVERS

Why we love it

Jen Orpin won the first DIVA Art Award at L Fest 2015 – we know talent when we see it.

JEN ORPIN

Mancunian artist Orpin's work has appeared in the last three series of Last Tango In Halifax and won the endorsement of DIVA art editor Anna McNay, who describes her work as breathtaking and atmospheric.

Various; contact the artist for details.

facebook.com/jenorpinpaintings





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For the
TRAVELLERS



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Why we love it

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Why we love it

What the longest-established women's sex shop in the UK doesn't know about sex ain't worth knowing.



SH! SAUCY STOCKINGFILLERS

For an irresistible range of toys to please all purses and fancies, head over to Sh! Women's Erotic Emporium. Thrill her with the sleek 'n' discreet Love Bullet silver lipstick vibrator (£25) or bring a bit of class to your bum sex with a gold jewelled butt plug (£25). Need help deciding? Swing along to the Sh! lesbian shopping event on 3 December for expert assistance, bubbles, mince pies, gift-wrapping, discounts and a special pressie for you from Sh!



Whatever your budget | sh-womenstore.com

For the
LIKE-MINDED

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ADDITIONAL
DIGITAL
CONTENT

More information on p7
divadigital.co.uk



“The most important thing is to be happy”

DIVA DISCOVERS WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN KRISTEN STEWART'S LIFE SINCE TWILIGHT, WHY SHE AVOIDS BLOCKBUSTERS AND WHAT IT'S LIKE LIVING UNDER THE TABLOID SPOTLIGHT
PORTRAITS DREW GURIAN

Kristen Stewart has been making headlines since she first shot to fame as Bella Swan in *Twilight* in 2008. The film, based on the trilogy of books by Stephanie Meyer, spawned a massively successful franchise, banking more than \$3.3 billion and catapulting Stewart to mega stardom. The young star has featured on just about every rich list since 2010 with reported earnings somewhere between 30 and 40 million dollars, and the 25-year-old already has more awards on her mantelpiece than most actors will earn in their whole careers. But despite critically acclaimed performances in films including *Still Alice* and *Clouds Of Sils Maria*, and reportedly starring as Chloe Sevigny's lover in an upcoming film about Lizzie Borden, it's not Stewart's work that has been creating those aforementioned headlines, but her personal life. ►



“I’ve always been shy. Acting was a refuge from the real world”

Of course, some would argue that an invasion of privacy is the price for the success enjoyed by the actress and her peers, but the intense media scrutiny afforded to Stewart seems disproportionate even by those standards and despite a flat refusal to join the tabloid game, they keep asking her to play.

That scrutiny got much worse last year, when during an interview with the Sunday Mirror, K-Stew’s mum Jules allegedly told Sharon Feinstein that her daughter was dating visual effects producer Alicia Cargile before later denying that she said such a thing, exploding the internet in the process. Many questioned whether Jules had outed her daughter, leading Kristen to later clarify the fact she couldn’t be out because she’d never been in, telling Nylon magazine that her sexuality and relationship were no secret.

“Google me, I’m not hiding,” she said, sending shockwaves through gossip rags the world over.

That should have been the end of the matter really, but Kristen’s admission that she wasn’t 100% straight only added fuel to the fire, and tabloids continue to wheel out anonymous sources “close to the couple” to speculate furiously on their relationship status and whether Kristen will “go back to men” – because misogyny and biphobia. “It’s like I’m involved in a weekly comic book,” she told Nylon. It’s exhausting for a spectator, never

mind being the person subjected to all the rumour and gossip. No wonder she’s not on social media.

So, with that in mind, we thought it would be good to turn the focus back on the main thing people should be talking about – her acting.

Equals is premised on the very interesting notion of a society that has managed to eliminate emotions. How do you approach a film like this when you’re being asked to work against your own talent and nature as an actor to portray emotions?

It was scary in a lot of ways. Nicholas [Hoult] and I would spend a lot of time just talking to each other and not showing a lot of visible emotion. We’re playing people who are drawn to each other and fall in love with each other even though that’s considered taboo behaviour.

Your character Nia is the one who is the more “switched-on” as it is known in the futuristic society...

Nia is the only one who can access her emotions all the time even though she’s not allowed to show those emotions. So that meant I had to put myself in the position of having these feelings but needing to somehow contain them and not let on what is going on inside her. In my own experience in this business that’s often a role I’ve had to play,

where you need to present yourself in a certain way even though you might be having a terrible day or going through a lot of issues in your life. We can all understand that kind of situation because in everyday life you’re often putting on a false front simply because it wouldn’t be socially acceptable to reveal what you’re really feeling.

You’ve attempted to carve out a different path in the film business ever since your Twilight work came to an end.

I need to choose films based on what my gut instincts tell me rather than approach things tactically. I made a conscious decision to avoid blockbusters and choose smaller projects that might attract less attention and not be very commercial but are going to satisfy me artistically. My only real plan is to do interesting work which I hope will help me evolve as an individual and lead to better things down the road.

Do you like to run against the grain when you work in films like Camp X-Ray, Sils Maria or in something like Equals?

I definitely have a rebellious side! [Laughs] I like to be able to do things my own way and be able to carve out my own identity without worrying too much about what others expect you to do. When it comes to my work, I won’t do any film where I don’t feel com- ▶

“I love acting more than ever now that I’m doing the kind of work that I want to be doing”

pletely committed to the story and the character I’m playing. I need to be fully invested emotionally in every project and that’s the only way I can work.

It hasn’t been easy for you to deal with all the attention you received earlier in your career when you were still very young. Are you still shy when it comes to being under the spotlight?

I’ve always been shy. I’m still that way even now, even after I’ve been in this business basically all my life and grew up knowing everything about the movies. Acting was always a refuge from the real world which allowed me to forget who I was and whatever I was anxious to do with my life. I originally wanted to write and maybe work as a director, but then acting took over and that’s become my main pursuit. I still love acting, maybe more than ever now that I’m doing the kind of work that I want to be doing.

You’ve worked with a number of outstanding actresses. Who has influenced or inspired you?

I’ve learnt a lot by working with some incredibly talented actors. On *Sils Maria*, I was fascinated by how much

research Juliette [Binoche] put into her preparation. She is constantly going over the script, discussing her scenes with you or the director, and going as deeply as she can into her work. When I was working with Julianne Moore, though, I saw how she took a very different approach and was focused more on the emotions of her character and being very introspective and relying more on her instincts. I like to be able to find a middle ground between those ways of working so that I can get past all my own personal things that block me and find the soul and essence of my character and at try to be very rigorous at doing that while still relying as much as I can on my instinct and spontaneity.

What does acting do for you? Is it therapeutic? Cathartic?

I see it as a means of looking more deeply into your own psychology when you’re attempting to understand what makes your characters behave the way they do and who they really are. It’s a process that helps me learn more about myself although I think just living every day and being with other people helps me do that, too. I like to believe that I’m living as honestly and authentically as possible.

Do you feel comfortable with who you are these days?

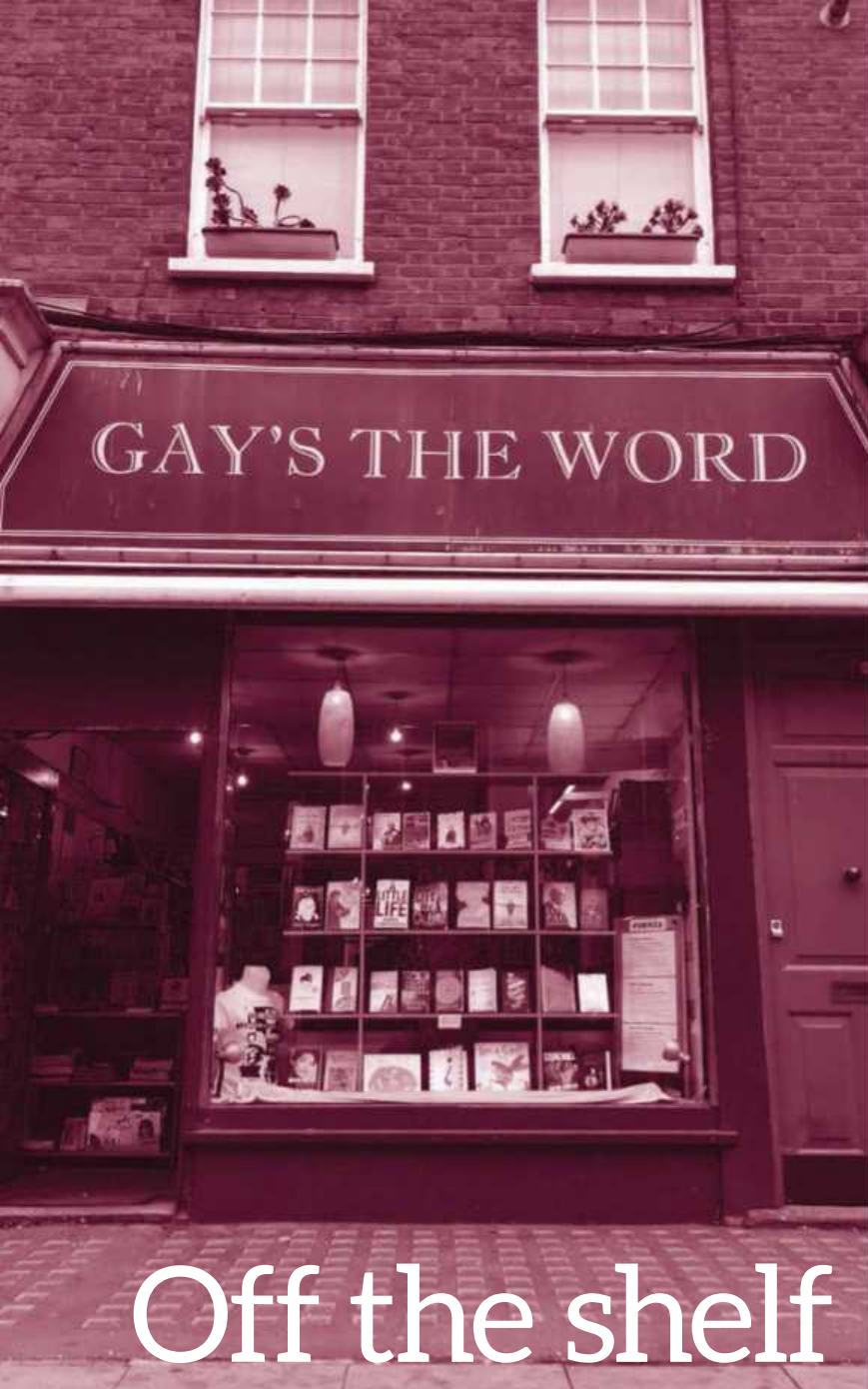
I’m a lot happier and I’m feeling really good. I feel I can be myself more and not allow myself to get sidetracked by other considerations or advice from people. Earlier in my career I had too many people telling me what I should be doing and it was hard for me to deal with all that. That was very confusing for me because I’ve always been the type of person who likes to do her own thing. But when your career reaches a certain level there are so many responsibilities that come with that and sometimes you feel that your life is not your own anymore. That’s why I decided to change a lot of things about how I was working and try to be true to myself.

Have you reached that point now?

It’s important to understand as soon as possible what you really want in life. Some people never figure that out but I think I’ve been able to make sense of what I want to accomplish and how I want to live... The most important thing is to be really happy. **D**

Equals hits UK cinemas in December.





AS NUMBERS
DWINDLE,
LGBT READERS
NEED TO
SUPPORT
PRECIOUS
COMMUNITY
BOOK STORES,
SAYS RACHEL
SHELLEY

You can't go wrong with a book for Christmas. There's something for everyone: from *Dogs In Jumpers* for your magazine editor friend to Jodie Foster: *A Biography* for your fangirl pal. And so long as they're from an independent seller, they not only bring Christmas cheer, they're doing good, too. They help keep that rare, almost extinct and oh-so-precious species alive and kicking – the wonderful community bookshop.

Whilst the world's oldest operating LGBT bookshop is thriving in Canada's downtown Toronto, it's sad to say that there is only one, yes one, surviving gay and lesbian bookshop in the whole of the UK. Fittingly located in the literary area of London's Bloomsbury, it was also the UK's first serious LGBT bookstore. Opening back in 1979 with the help of the then unknown Camden councillor Ken Livingstone, Gay's The Word went on to pioneer through the 80s becoming, amongst other things, headquarters for the action group Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners. With a backstory ripe for a movie, the plucky book-store spawned the marvelous 2014 feature film, *Pride*.

Gay's The Word (GTW) was named after a musical by the flamboyantly homosexual composer Ivor Novello. In its early days the shop had a lively café, a piano with Novello's score on its rack, comfy chairs and a notice board teeming with flat-shares and upcoming meetings like the weekly Lesbian

"It's a lot more than a book store. It feels like family"

Off the shelf

RIP RADICAL BOOKSHOPS

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN INDEPENDENT BOOKSELLERS WERE ON EVERY HIGH STREET? IF NOT, IMAGINE A NETWORK OF THESE NOW-CLOSED STORES, PROVOKING DEBATE AND BUILDING COMMUNITIES, LETTING YOU BROWSE DIVA AND OTHER LGBT MAGS THAT OTHERWISE WOULD NOT HAVE EXISTED (LIKE SHOCKING PINK, QUIM AND SQUARE PEG). IMAGINE HOW THEY SHAPED A GENERATION OF FEMINISTS WITH THEIR SPIRIT OF INQUIRY. SOME OF DIVA'S FAVOURITES:

BOOMTOWN BOOKS, ABERDEEN. 1976-1991. Had a badge-making machine.

LIBERTAS BOOKS, YORK. 1998-2004. Owner Jenny Roberts also founded the York Lesbian Arts Festival.

COMPENDIUM BOOKS, CAMDEN, LONDON. 1968-2001. Cultural centre for the punk rock scene.

FRONTLINE BOOKS, MANCHESTER. Co-operative run venture, in a central location.

GRAPEVINE BOOKS, CAMBRIDGE. Reopened in 1984 by volunteers, later including DIVA deputy editor Louise Carolin, now a coffee joint.

GREENLEAF BOOKS, BRISTOL. 1982-2005. A worker's

co-op that leant its address to organisations like Gay Switchboard.

INDEX BOOK CENTRE, BRIXTON, LONDON. 1988-2005. Located on Brixton's famous Electric Avenue.

SILVER MOON BOOKS, CHARING CROSS, LONDON. 1984-2001. The legendary feminist bookstore named after two symbols of womanhood in a Sappho poem. Playwright Sarah Daniels remembers how "years ago I worked with a (male) writer whose girlfriend worked in Silver Moon. They kept their novels by and about lesbians downstairs, and had a notice saying 'Women Only'. One of the reasons for this is men had been caught masturbating over them. Many male

customers made quite a fuss until the assistant told them the reason why and then apparently even the hardened (sorry) would slink off".

SISTERWRITE, UPPER STREET, LONDON. Closed circa 1990. Rumour has it this feminist bookshop didn't even let men come in.

WEST AND WILDE, EDINBURGH. 1982-1997. Previously *Lavender Menace*, was renamed after queer authors Vita Sackville West and Oscar Wilde. LGBT Youth Scotland is commissioning a play about its founders.

WOOLFSON AND TAY, BERMONDSEY. 2010-2013. A lesbian-run store that tried two locations in under three years.

Discussion Group. The café and piano went in 1984, but the discussion group is still flourishing 30 years on. The bookshop rapidly became what its founder Ernest Hole dreamed it would be – a meeting place and information point for lesbians and gay men, in a world where imported gay literature was still seized by HM Customs and Excise, for being obscene. GTW fought that too.

Of course, as co-manager Jim MacSweeney says, it's more than just a bookshop. A place like GTW is a community hub that actively promotes lesbian and feminist issues, where runaway teenagers go to seek refuge, where, as MacSweeney recalls, two women meet at a Lesbian Discussion Group and a year later get hitched. It's a not-for-profit venture, where individuals like Sarah Waters sponsor shelves. Stores like GTW host radical events, serve as entertainment and advocacy venues, launch authors and books, offer personal recommendations and invite debate. So when they fall, which they have with sickening regularity, a bookshop takes with it a little bit of the community it serves.

Great bookshops are safe spaces, where customers can and do find themselves spilling the emotional beans. As Jane Cholmeley, co-owner of London's legendary women's bookshop, Silver Moon, which closed in 2001, told the Guardian: "Sometimes I've felt more like a social worker than a bookseller."


The radical community bookshop News From Nowhere (NFN) in Liverpool

takes its name from the title of William Morris' 19th century utopian novel. And talking to Mandy Vere, who's worked there for 39 of its 41 years, leaves one feeling bathed in Morris' ethos that "a better world is possible". It's a women only co-op, so as Mandy says, "everyone is incredibly committed, works incredibly long hours, and combines a love of literature with a belief that books are integral to human lives". This and the fact they bought their premises back in 1996 with charitable help, means they've survived the whims of cash-hungry landlords. Like GTW, they belong to the Alliance of Radical Booksellers, so they stock nothing oppressive. Their aim is to inspire, support and report.

Happily, NFN has also maintained its 50p-a-cuppa policy, its comfy chairs and kids' toy-box. They have carved a niche for themselves in Liverpool's buoyant radical community, becoming a central part of its soul. They have, according to Mandy, become "a sanctuary for individuals and groups. We straddle culture and politics. I've lost count of the number of people who've said... coming in here gave me hope for my future". And maybe the future is hopeful, as the collective conscience shifts away from tax-shirking multi-

nationals, with just enough people realising that buying local is essential for cohesive community.

One thing all these bookstores share is a welcoming, positive atmosphere. They're a safe space, a little haven. As one patron put it, "there is queer and trans culture in the walls". There's no attitude, staff are incredibly well-read, knowledgeable people-persons. But one thing understandably gets them all very rattled, as Radwa from Toronto's LGBT book shop Glad Day explains: "There is nothing more annoying than someone coming in and asking for a list of recommendations and then saying thank you, I'll go and buy it on Amazon. It's like – no, no, you don't get to do that, I spent a half hour going round the store with you, this is how I get paid. If you are asking for a recommendation – support!" Especially as most bookstores have an online shopping site too.

So if you're thinking of Christmas, think books, and think of your local independent store. Because you're not just buying a book. You're helping to build, save and maintain a community, to hold on to your history. As Glad Day's Radwa in Toronto puts it – "It's a lot more than a book store. It feels like family." 

GLAD DAY

GLAD DAY BOOK STORE, TORONTO

Glad Day is the world's oldest operating LGBT bookshop, one block east of Toronto's gay district of Church Wellesley Village. Named after a William Blake painting, the store began in 1970. Active in anti-censorship, by 2011 the bookshop was failing, so an extremely diverse 22-member collective was formed by teacher Michael Erickson.

They soon realised the store catered and appealed almost exclusively to a generation of gay men who'd grown up with the shop. Radwa Auda, 23, a literature grad who's worked at the store for three years explains – "It was a really big haven for a lot of young gay men in the 70s. To the point it was becoming detrimental." Glad Day barely stocked any lesbian fiction.



Glad Day, Toronto

Manager Scott Dagostino continues: "[In 2011] we walked in. There were three women standing shoulder to shoulder in a cramped corner of the bookshop, all trying to browse. It was a ghastly image. So our very first change was to drag it all out and create lesbian fiction against the entire east wall. Since then we've had an easier time attracting women to the store... with our tunnel of lesbianism! Our trans section has exploded these last two years... There's a hunger for it and we roll with it."

And to keep rolling, Glad Day must keep changing, as Scott recognizes: "I worked here as a clerk in the mid 90s. I didn't always see eye-to-eye with the old guard. They were old-school 70s gays, I was 90s politically correct gay, so we sometimes clashed... Now we have people like Radwa who argue with me!"

The collective also runs the floor above the store – an ever-popular venue for readings, performances, meetings etc. And, they say, plenty of great parties.

Bound Feet Blues, Yang-May Ooi's memoir and one-woman show, is a wonderful curation of a family's oral history, an unbroken genealogy of ancestral love and sacrifice through time, from China to Malaysia and England.

The lesbian writer/performer uses the metaphor of foot binding to unravel her own constrained personal journey in which she tries to fulfil the expectations of her many female ancestors and also develop an independent identity of her own. Her coming out is a slow unfurling movement away from repeated attempts to play the uber-seductive female. High heels and perfectly-tailored cheongsams are more modern kinds of boundedness within the history of the limits of what constitutes femininity. It is a life told in shoes and the more Yang-May

discovers her true self, the bigger her shoes get.

DIVA: In Bound Feet Blues there seems to be an honouring of ancestral history and an empathy for holding onto traditions like foot binding, despite the sheer pain and torturous nature of the practice. Was there any history of dissent? A lesbian one, perhaps?

YANG-MAY OOI: The insidious thing about foot binding was that it was done to girls when they were very young – aged four – so they did not know any better. They grew up being told it was for their benefit – to find a good husband – and it was tied up with their sense of self-worth. This was a value that they passed on to their daughters. I could not find any

ALENA
DIERICKX
SPEAKS TO
AUTHOR/
PERFORMER
YANG-MAY
OOI ABOUT
IDENTITY,
FAMILY, LOVE
AND SACRIFICE

dissenting voices in my research from women during that time – but then most of the contemporary writing about foot binding and the beauty of bound feet was by men. However, there is the amazing Qiu Jin, who had bound feet but was a revolutionary in the early 1900s in China, who learned martial arts and rode horses despite her bound feet. (Read Yang-May's blog post about Qiu Jin at tinyurl.com/DIVAQiuJin.)

I can relate to your childhood perceptions of men having freedom and a higher status than girls, and wanting to disobey this unfairness. Do you think being a lesbian or masculine woman is disobedience?
Obedience is about giving up your will to another. I was always battling

Bound Feet Blues

A LIFE IN SHOES



against the will of my elders, I think because I wanted to preserve a sense of my self. It was instinctive and at that time, I couldn't have put it into words. I wanted to be seen and loved for who I was – not for playing a part. In the end, when I came out, I saw that I could be loved in this unconditional way and that has allowed me to be all that I am.

In most cultures, including our modern Western one, there is an underlying complicity that women should be obedient to men. That men need to be centre of the universe, both their own and ours. Lesbians may perform femininity or masculinity – or anything in between – but by our very preference for other women, we do not put men at the centre of our lives or hearts and are therefore gloriously disobedient.

Gender seems to be very much about movement in this work, the freedom of body and purpose that men have and the boundedness of females, especially in clothing, like the cheongsams that cannot allow much movement. How do you think about clothing as a lesbian in relation to your history?

In the show, even more than in the book, you will see the contrast between movement and stillness (being bound). The adult women are very still in the first half of the show – rooted/ bound to the spot. Only the child moves freely. In the second half, the triumph of my journey is expressed in movement and running.

Clothing, as well as shoes, have played a huge part in my life as metaphors for restriction and freedom. Conventionally feminine clothes made me look beautiful and powerful in a feline, conventionally sexy way. But I didn't like not being able to move freely in the slimline skirts and high heel shoes that made me feel unbalanced. After I came out, I had a phase of dressing in boys and men's clothes – rather like Ellen DeGeneres – but that masculinity didn't express all of who I was. These days I channel a mix of feminine and masculine, I suppose – biker-style boots, jeans and a leather jacket over a camisole, with or without make-up. That feels right because it expresses all the aspects of who I am.

Your journey as a writer evolving into a creative performance artist is really interesting. Live story-telling is a tradition in many cultures and you are conscious of this genealogy, do you think it can be a way of empowering either cultural or sexual "otherness" as an art form?

That's a brilliant thought. Yes, I think it can be an amazingly powerful art form in terms of telling the stories of otherness. In live storytelling, you are there as your whole self – not just on the printed page through your words but in all your physicality, with your voice, tone, facial expression as well as your words. Who you are in the context of culture and sexuality is fully present for the audience.


Also, for the storyteller, espe-

cially at the Story Party club, which I have co-hosted, it can be incredibly empowering to tell your story and see its impact on the audience. The focus at the Story Party is to tell an inspiring story – so by transforming your personal story into one that has a message for the audience, your life can transcend the everyday. I believe passionately that lesbian stories – and those of the LGBTQ community – have universal truths that can inspire others, whatever their sexuality, and I would love to see more of us out there telling our stories.

Your experience of shoes gets bigger and more liberated as we move through the book, and as the BFI declared 2015 the year of the strong woman, how do you see female strength now when compared to all those women who had bound feet?

We have physical strength, stamina and athleticism. We also have strength in our tenderness, heart and vulnerability. A strong woman is not one who is like a man or who embodies traditionally female characteristics. We are each a powerful mixture of all qualities and we are each unique. If we can live our lives and express our full selves in all that we are as unique individuals – and to allow others to do the same – we would be powerful indeed!

You say at one point in the book that you wanted to be Suzie Quatro but you wanted to have Emma Peel. I love that! Did you achieve your own version of this ambition?

I don't have a one-piece leather jumpsuit unzipped to the navel like the young Suzi Quatro! But what she really signified for me in my childhood was disobedience, defiance and daring – in other words: a woman who is creative, sexy and powerful on her own terms. And I like to think that I've become all that now. And, yes, I have my own Emma Peel – my partner Angie Macdonald has her own kickass boots and can flip me over with a stern look any day. 

Yang-May Ooi is performing Bound Feet Blues at the Tristan Bates Theatre from 24 November to 12 December as part of the Southeast Asian Arts Festival, seaartsfest.org.

Bound Feet Blues – A Life In Shoes (Urbane Publications) is on sale now, £12.99.



Family ties: Yang-May Ooi and her great-grandmother Ah Mooi with bound feet (inset)

Lesbians, by our very preference for other women, are gloriously disobedient

TIRED OF TURKEY? FED UP WITH THE FAMILY? LOOKING FOR SOME MEANING IN IT ALL? ALENA DIERICKX SHARES HER FESTIVE SURVIVAL TIPS

There's no avoiding Christmas. Regardless of your religion or world views, it's a great big glittery number each year because it's the place where all dominant Western values collide into one huge overrated orgy of overindulgence: hetero-normativity, capitalism, family, Christianity. As a counsellor, and from personal experience, I know that Christmas is a difficult time for many people. If "traditional" family doesn't mean much to you, or you're single or just not into Christmas, it can be a tricky time. Sometimes, though, with a little planning, or even some serious avoidance, it can be fun, and most definitely worth doing on your own terms. Here are my 12 ways to re-consider the festive season.

2 RITUALISE THE ORDINARY

25 December is just a date but winter can be a time of gathering all your thoughts and ideas together to make new plans or consolidate what you already have. 8 December is celebrated by Buddhists to remember Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. It can be celebrated with meditation and lights as an alternative to all the glitz. And the 22nd is the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year. I think that has romantic potential, but you could also meet up with friends and celebrate early, ritualise the things that mean something to you. Rituals make ordinary days much more interesting and memorable, it doesn't all have to be turtle doves.

3 MAKE CONNECTIONS

There are people that we lose touch with over the years, but it can be great to make time to call or send a card to people we like and care about but don't see very often. Equally, why do we spend so much time at Christmas with people we really don't want to be with? Unsurprisingly, it's so often a time when relationships are tested or end altogether, so it's worth reflecting on who matters in our lives. One Christmas I opted out altogether and went to the French Festival of Lights in Lyon to watch everyone put their little candles and lights along every building. It was a magical avoidance but I felt part of something nonetheless.

4 MAKE TIME FOR LOVE

This could include birds of the feathery kind as well as the hot stuff you've had your eye on lately. Whether it's to really show how much you appreciate your loved ones, give yourself some pampering time, save the world/wildlife or visit a lonely neighbour, show some love. It's a natural high to make someone's day and forget about yourself for a while. Love doesn't have to be in a couple shape. We have other loves; go for a really long walk with the pooch and make tinsel earrings for your parrot, or do what you love that you usually don't have time for.

5 MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

Christmas money and giving has a long history, from the Magi's gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to coins in the plum pudding. But less romantic is the issue of debt. Christmas is only actually one day, but many people spend years paying back loans to cover the cost. Loan sharks make a lot of their profits from this time of year. Re-design festivities within your budget. I bet you don't even remember what you got for Christmas last year!

6 MAKE TIME TO CHILL, OR... GET LAID

Depending on your energy levels and current circumstances, use the holiday to rest and catch up on sleep instead of courting a stream of hangovers. For some, a little "sexercise" will revive low energy; utilise the time – don't waste it stuffing your face and feeling sick for a week.

1 DON'T LET IT ALL GO PEAR-SHAPED

Be in control of what you want to do with the holiday; it's not that difficult. If you have the kind of mum, partner or friend who dictates Christmas plans, decide for yourself what you want and how you can make it happen. If it all goes pear-shaped despite your best efforts, volunteer at a charity or go away somewhere and hide out with a good book and some chocolate marzipan.

12 STEPS TO SURVIVING CHRISTMAS

7 EXERCISE
Not just swimming and cycling, but exercise that mind, too. Read a great book you always wanted to, go to a pub quiz with friends, or play crazy golf with or without kids on Christmas Eve. It's a great excuse to leave a family do early or arrive a bit late.

8 FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD!
If you have the same Christmas food every year, why not try something new? Forget the little animal carcass with its stumpy legs in the air and go animal free – try a roasted mushroom Wellington or aromatic vegan sushi instead. Lose the milk too; Animal Aid do some great chocolates and Booja Booja make fab ice cream; just add rum for a festive kick.

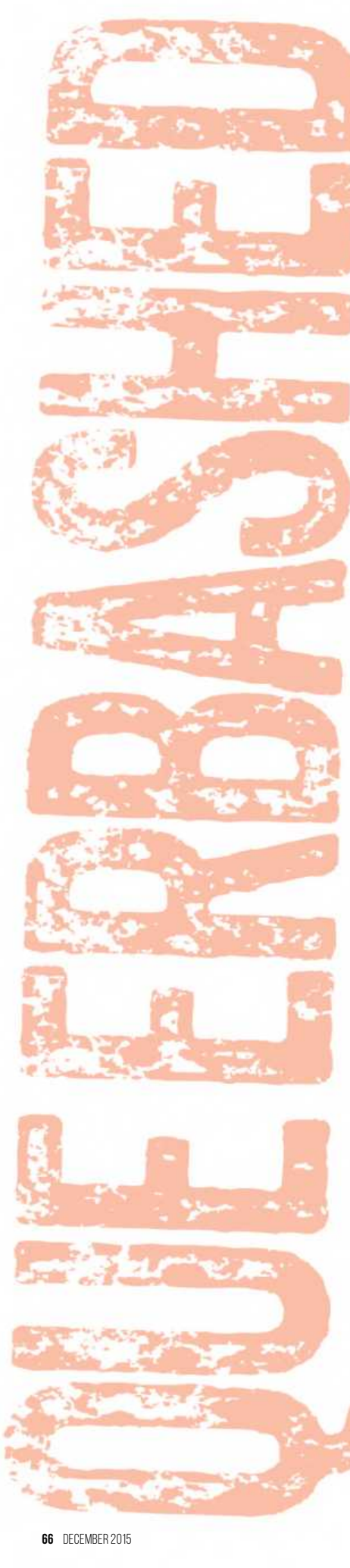
9 PARTY!
Because the whole nuclear family thing can domesticate the Christmas experience, why not throw a party and get everyone to bring supplies, but don't invite the folk that drink all your Champagne and bring you a plant. Take out the stress of slaving over a hot stove and have a good dance instead.

10 TAKE A LEAP OF FAITH
Throughout December I've decided to take a leap of faith in myself. That is, I'm going to look at just one thing I want to achieve over the next year and assess what I've done in the last 12 months. No bull, no excuses, just plain acceptance and a real plan to make something happen. The winter metaphor of hibernation is, after all, to germinate new life from the old.

11 ALLOW ONE MOST WONDERFUL INDULGENCE
For some it will be the piped icing on a Christmas cake followed by the marzipan. I'm more of an Armagnac on the rocks kind of gal, but whatever we think of Christmas, an indulgence of some sort is no bad thing. Savour, rather than gorge.

12 AND FINALLY...
A great way to spend Christmas is by volunteering at your local homeless shelter or food bank. Crisis at Christmas (crisis.org.uk) are still recruiting volunteers, as is the Trussell Trust (trusselltrust.org.uk). Although helping out at your local food bank is the one most synonymous with Christmas, there are plenty of other choices such as helping the elderly and sparing some time to visit them, packing and delivering parcels for those in need, or spending time with the homeless. Christmas may only come once a year but it can be a particularly difficult and lonely time, especially so if you can't go back home because of homophobic family members. If you are feeling lonely and even suicidal, remember you're not alone. Call Switchboard LGBT+ on 0300 330 0630 (open from 10am and 11pm every day) or the Samaritans on 116 123; they really are a friend at the end of the phone and they've helped thousands of people over the years.

Alena Dierickx can be contacted at shoreditchtherapy.com



"I know you ain't two bitches." His voice sounded low in my ear, so close I felt his breath on my neck, just briefly before his hand smacked the back of my head, hard, pitching me face first into the shop window I'd been browsing while waiting for the bus. The change in my hand rattled to the ground as my forehead hit the metal shutter.

The first time I was physically assaulted for being a queer woman it came out of nowhere. This was ironic because, looking back, my entire 20s were lived to a relentless soundtrack of homophobic abuse. With my shaved head and DM boots, I was a very visible dyke. My girlfriend looked similar. We were accustomed to harassment and quick to judge whether a situation had the potential to turn nasty, united in our willingness to return fire if the culprits seemed to be all mouth, which they usually were. "Oi, dykes!" "Yeah, well spotted! Ten out of 10, lads!" Nevertheless, you might say I lived my life always primed for attack. Now here it was and I was completely unprepared.

He hit my girlfriend next. In the face. Suddenly everyone who'd been standing around us melted away. We were alone, reeling with shock, on a street that had been teeming with people. Our attacker disappeared up the road. What I recall was the paralysing shame; for the first time ever I was afraid to reach out to my lover in public. I forced myself, she batted my hands away. We had asked for it. Two short-haired women in jeans and boots and no make-up. Obvious lesbians. Of course someone had decided to teach us a lesson.

According to Stonewall's 2008 report on hate crime, homophobic violence is gendered. Almost one third of lesbian respondents had been insulted or harassed because of their sexual orientation, compared with about a fifth of gay men. Gay men, on the other hand, were more than twice as likely to have been physically assaulted. It is racialised too; while four per cent of all lesbians and gay men have been physically assaulted because of their orientation, the figure doubles for black and minority ethnic (BME) lesbian and gay people.

These figures speak of the endemic sexual harassment of women highlighted by Laura Bates' Everyday Sexism project. Vast numbers of men consider it their right to comment offensively on any passing female. Therefore it is not

WHAT IS HATE CRIME AND HOW DOES IT AFFECT LESBIANS AND BI WOMEN?

WORDS LOUISE CAROLIN

surprising that lesbians (and bi women, who are mostly invisible in hate crime statistics) are subject to more verbal abuse than gay men, just as the higher incidence of physical assaults on gay men reflects the fact that men generally are more likely than women to experience violent attack by a stranger.

This is not to say that serious physical assaults on lesbians and bi women are unknown. In February this year, Roisin Prendergast, 20, and 17-year-old Ciara Murphy were attacked in Limerick, Ireland. In July, Jackie Hatton-Hesketh, 44, was beaten by men who called her a "dirty lesbian", in Llandudno, Wales. We know about these cases because they were reported to police and covered by the media, but experts believe that the vast majority of homophobic hate incidents go unreported, and for lesbians and bi women this may be because, for most of us, they are less likely to involve violence.

We are far more likely to be harassed when we are with a girlfriend than when we are alone (the figures reverse for gay men), and lesbians who have experienced hate crime are more than twice as likely than gay men to say that the perpetrator knew they were gay because of how they looked. Maybe this is why we often feel as if we are somehow to blame.

Perhaps, to report, you need a robust sense that you deserve respect; a sense still lacking, deep down, in too many of us. My DIVA colleagues and I must be the very definition of proud queer women and yet none of us has ever made a report.

"I've experienced so many incidents [of verbal abuse] I've lost count," says Carrie. "Sometimes I respond, most of the time I walk on by. I've never felt particularly compelled to do anything about it and wonder if that's because, deep down, there's a part of me that feels like that's par for the course if you 'look like a lesbian'. I feel like I deserve it, I suppose. But also because I'm not convinced anything would be done about it. Physical abuse is one thing, but name calling? Sticks and stones and all that."

Jane, who told me about being harassed when travelling on public transport with her partner, while fellow passengers watched passively, said: "Even when you're totally reconciled with your sexuality incidents like that are a nasty reminder that society still views you as abject and that as such

"There's a part of me that feels like hateful abuse is par for the course if you 'look like a lesbian'"

you deserve to be publicly shamed."

As a woman – let alone a lesbian or bisexual one – you grow a thick skin, but does our habit of "put up and shut up" contribute to the problem?

I spoke to Jo Whitehead, hate crime caseworker at Galop, about other issues that might prevent women from reporting homophobic abuse. "A lot of people are very reluctant to contact the police, particularly BME people and trans people, and also older LGBT people who lived through a time when it was illegal to be gay and there was a lot of harassment and intimidation," she notes. She also points to the poor response victims often receive from the police. "Personally, I don't encourage people to report by calling 101. You're often speaking to someone on a switchboard who may not even know what LGBT means. You don't want to be in a situation where you're feeling quite vulnerable and anxious, having to explain your identity."

While police services around the UK are keen to promote the increased reporting of homophobic and transphobic hate crime as evidence that LGBT people are gaining confidence that they will be treated with respect, Galop's own research (2013) has shown that a quarter of victims are dissatisfied with the police response to a report of homophobic hate crime. According to Stonewall (2013), 37% of BME lesbian, gay or bisexual people would expect to be treated worse by the police when reporting a crime if their sexual orientation was known (compared with 26% of all LGB people).

Individuals don't even need to have had a poor experience with the police themselves, to be put off reporting an incident, says Whitehead. People talk, word gets around, expectations are lowered, and that's before you factor in anxiety and shame.

Amanda, who responded to my request for women's experiences, told of an incident in which she and her partner were insulted by a homophobic man in a restaurant. When she confronted him, he launched a torrent of abuse before grabbing her throat. In the scuffle, he tripped and fell. The manager backed her but Amanda was afraid to involve police. "As he was the one who ended up on the floor, I was worried I would be considered the one at fault. I wish I had reported it now. I really do. It has affected me massively. I am no longer

openly affectionate with my girlfriend, for fear of being attacked again. I want to be open and proud, but I also want an easy life. It kills me actually, because I know my girlfriend would continue to be as affectionate as before, but I am still 'letting' it affect me. I'm genuinely cross with myself for that."

Victims often experience anxiety and depression in the aftermath of a homophobic attack, says Whitehead. And ongoing, "low-level" incidents such as repetitive verbal harassment by neighbourhood kids can have a significant impact on individuals' emotional wellbeing. But there can be huge benefits to reporting hate crime, she believes. "It can be empowering for people to report it; it's saying I'm not going to put up with this, it isn't ok, I'm going to do something rather than nothing, because [my attacker] could do something to somebody else."

Many police forces now have LGBT liaison officers, who are specially trained to act as the first point of contact for people reporting homophobic incidents. It is also possible to report online – anonymously if you wish – via organisations like Galop and Stop Hate UK.


DIVA reader Miriam told me about the verbal abuse she and her partner experienced in London as a biracial couple. "At least once a month, men shouted 'LESBIANS!' after us from their cars, lorries, or vans. In east London, in the daytime, a group of teenagers shouted 'LESBIANS? OI, LESBIANS???' after us on the street and wouldn't stop until they were headed a different direction."

Even such "minor" incidents are worth logging, says Whitehead. "If you are on a street in a strange town and

someone shouts something at you, you might feel it's meaningless but it might not be to police because they'll be aware of incidents happening in that area."

Crucially, you needn't be the victim, or even know them, to report an incident. Online facilities enable anyone witnessing harassment or an attack to describe what they saw; again, it is up to you whether you give contact information.

So, how much faith should we put in the police to tackle hate incidents? Jo Whitehead is circumspect. With funding cuts creating pressure on services, police often place more importance on solving extreme crimes such as murder. But there is an increasing acknowledgement by police that "low level" incidents such as persistent harassment have a huge impact on people's lives and can sometimes escalate into violence. "Education needs to be happening in schools," Whitehead states. "It's absolutely key and I don't think the police have necessarily got the knowledge, expertise or time to be doing that. But Galop has worked with neighbourhood teams, the bobby on the beat who knows the local patch, and they know the local groups of teenagers and some of them can be great – they'll go down and talk to people."

In the end, whether the information we share helps to build a case for better policing or more education, there is good reason to report hate. As lesbian, bisexual and queer women of all colours and faiths, disabled or trans or not, it's time we internalised the message that our safety, comfort and wellbeing matter. That we matter. Because we do. 

HATE CRIME: WHAT COUNTS?

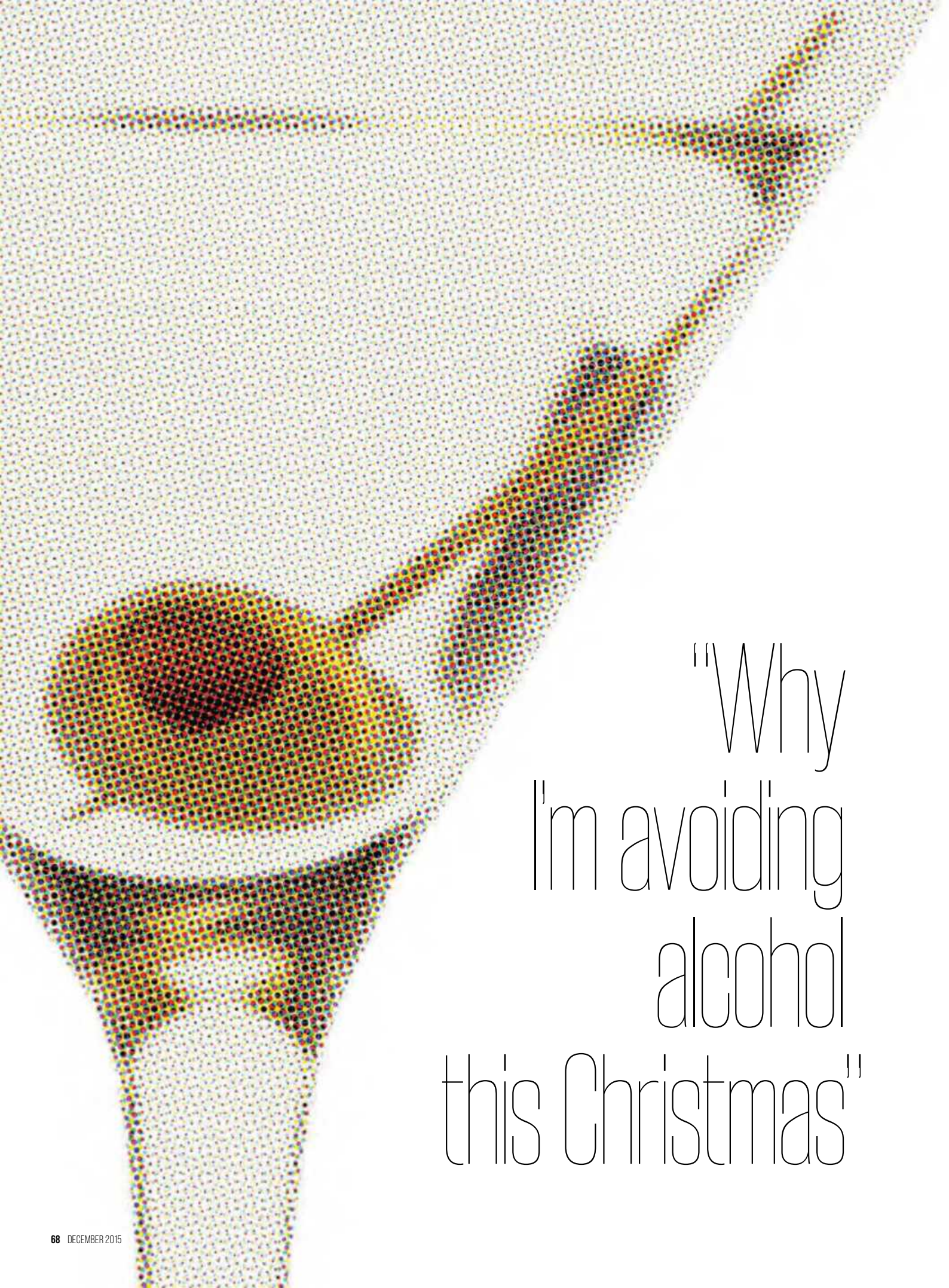
Hate incidents are motivated by hostility or prejudice based on disability, race, religion, transgender identity or sexual orientation. Some people may be targeted for more than one of these characteristics. Hate incidents may include:

- * Verbal abuse like name-calling and offensive jokes
- * Bullying or intimidation by children, adults, neighbours or strangers
- * Physical attacks such as hitting, punching, pushing, spitting

- * Threats of violence
- * Hoax calls, abusive phone or text messages, hate mail
- * Online abuse, for example on Facebook or Twitter
- * Displaying or circulating discriminatory literature or posters
- * Harm or damage to things such as your home, pet, vehicle
- * Graffiti
- * Arson
- * Malicious complaints

You can report hate incidents to the police; they are obliged to record

them. When reporting it is important to say that you see the incident as being motivated by hate. A hate incident becomes a crime when it is also a criminal offence such as assault, criminal damage, harassment, theft, sexual assault, burglary or sending hate mail. Crimes motivated by hate can be sentenced more harshly. For more info or to report online visit galop.org.uk, stophate.org or citizensadvice.org.uk. In immediate danger call 999.



"Why
I'm avoiding
alcohol
this Christmas"

What would the festive season be without sloshed snogs under the mistletoe at your favourite bar, your boss doing the Macarena with the head of HR at the work Christmas party and Aunt Kate getting wasted on brandy and falling asleep at the Christmas dinner table, eh? Christmas. It's a time for socialising, a time for fun... a time for everyone to get totally trollied, right? Wrong. This year, maybe spare a thought for those of us whose relationship with booze is a little darker. If your colleague isn't chugging down the free champers with abandon, there might be a reason why – and she might not appreciate you pushing the issue.

I tried my first sip of alcohol one Christmas, aged seven. Little did I know the kind of thrall that ruby nectar (and its other ethanol-based siren sisters) would grow to hold me in. Christmases got drunker as I entered my mid-teens, as they would for many people that age, but then so did the rest of the year. Waking up the day after my 16th birthday, I told myself firmly that there was a problem with how much I was drinking. Wine temporarily took the edge off the dreadful depression I'd been fighting for the past couple of years: a depression intensified by bad homophobic bullying at school. But it also created messes, dramas, confusions. I realised, with creeping dread, that it was making my depression temporarily better and permanently worse.

Problem is, I just couldn't stop. I began to call it the "Booze Carousel". If you're in the throes of a bad depression, alcohol boosts your mood temporarily. Then it sends you to sleep. So far, so good. Until it wakes you up. Headache, nausea, regrets over things you did or said, or just *think* you might have done or said. Those regrets, however, are magnified 20 times beyond the level of a normal hangover. You brazen it out as long as you can. But if you've become a slave to the sauce, physically and psychologically addicted to alcohol, then nine times out of 10 you end up turning to a "hair of the dog" to make it stop. And you're back to square one. Even short periods of abstinence can turn into excuses to "just have one" because you're feeling so clear-headed. The late, great Robin Williams summed up this seeming lapse in logic perfectly. "There's a voice that tells alcoholics we

AFTER YEARS OF DRINKING TO EASE THE SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION, CHARLOTTE DINGLE IS SAYING BYE TO BOOZE

can drink," he quipped. "It's the same voice you hear if you go to the top of a really tall building and there's a voice and it says, 'Jump, you can fly!'"

I turn 32 this New Year's Eve (yep, a great birthday for an alcoholic, I know). If I'm still drinking, I will by then have officially spent half my lifetime – with a few short gaps – knowingly self-medicating my depression with alcohol. A genuinely scary thought. Until this year, where at all possible, I took great pains to hide my dependency whilst simultaneously trying to fight it. Sometimes hiding it took such a toll that I even began to convince myself for a while that I was drinking "normally" and that I should stop worrying. Other times, hearing people make tasteless jokes about how they "needed to go to AA" after their fourth G&T and hollowly joining in with their laughter, I felt the guiltiest fraud ever. But if I say anything they'll be horrified, I told myself sternly. Just don't. They think you only get trashed and behave like an idiot on nights out. They think your drinking is funny, most of the time. They don't know you lie there alone and drink yourself to sleep most nights as well. They don't know that on bad mornings you reach for a beer before you even get out of bed. For all I was knocking back, I was still a "functioning alcoholic" in many people's eyes.

Trying to recover from depression can be a very hit-or-miss process and it's easy to feel like giving up. It can be galling to find that yet another course of treatment isn't working when you've been turning up to appointments religiously for months, making sure you take your pills on time and essentially doing everything "right". It's no wonder that many of us march straight out of yet another fruitless counselling session and into the pub for the only thing we know will make us feel better for a few hours. So what if it sets us a few steps forward today and 10 steps backwards tomorrow?

The irony being, of course, that most treatments – particularly meds – don't have half as much chance of working if the patient is drinking heavily. But how can the patient stop drinking heavily when the depression is still there? Catch-22. The Booze Carousel strikes again. You can fly.

At the beginning of the year, I finally gathered the courage to start writing about my mental health problems (and specifically my struggles with Borderline Personality Disorder, a condition commonly linked with substance abuse). Later in the year, I wrote about my suicide attempt, which was even more terrifying. But still the idea of talking about alcoholism was out of the question. It was the last taboo. Enough people perceive non-drinking depressives as weak-willed, indulgent people who don't want to be helped – alcoholics get even worse press. Selfish. Beyond hope. I couldn't bear the thought of being asked why I still hadn't managed to knock it on the head after years of ducking in and out of AA and counselling, with a supportive family behind me. Of being asked why I couldn't just have a pint at the weekend like a normal person. It was one night while listening to Jesse Stewart's highly underrated folk-punk classic Cold Beer (I won't judge you if you have to look that one up – I did say it was underrated) that I really thought about it. Thought about what a comfort that song was to me. Thought about all the people who'd been afflicted with this thing, come out with it and been honest. And that was that.

For me, discussing my drinking publicly has been absolutely the best move I could make. It's my two fingers at this thing that has controlled me so long. I refuse to feel shame. I am ill. Most people write about alcoholism when looking back: "five years clean" articles raking over the horrors of their drinking years and telling everyone how much better everything is now. But I bring you a report from within the maelstrom. A maelstrom from within which I can now see a light. I haven't stopped drinking yet, but I know I'm on the way now. So if you see me out and about with an orange juice this Christmas, don't try and tempt me to join in your bacchanalian revelries, give me a big old pat on the back and buy me another. Knowing me, I'll probably dance on the table anyway. **D**

Alcohol was making my depression temporarily better and permanently worse

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR DRINKING?

Advice for you
drinkaware.co.uk | alcoholconcern.org.uk
nhs.uk/livewell/alcohol

Advice for friends and family
al-anonuk.org.uk

Finding an AA meeting in your area
alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/AA-Meetings



"Is there anybody there?"
Participants at a séance attempt
to speak with the dead

Sex and the Séance

The word *séance* may conjure up images of ghostly figures, darkened rooms and bereaved people in Victorian dress huddled around circular tables, but the *séance* in its Victorian day was also an occasion of titillation and sexual opportunity.

Social sexual mores of the time, the public appearance of morality, and sexual abstinence before or strict monogamy within marriage, belied another world that was hidden and discreet. But the *séance* offered yet another possibility, an acceptable public sphere where a female spirit might appear in scanty transparent dresses, kiss a stranger on the head, or have a stranger's hand placed on her thigh or breast to prove she was "real".

My novel *A Ghost's Story* attempts to see the world through the eyes of a much celebrated spirit, Katie King, who was believed in by many spiritualists for more than a century. While I was researching it I became fascinated by the men and women of the Victorian period, and the decades that followed, who inhabited this sphere. Not only the mediums themselves, but

**LORNA GIBB
REVEALS
THE FEVERED
EROTIC WORLD
OF THE EARLY
20TH CENTURY
SÉANCE**

also the *séance* participants, in some cases women who would come only to examine all of the orifices of a female medium prior to a sitting just to show that she was not concealing an object of trickery on or in her body, or men who would become so obsessed by a supposed spirit manifestation that they would abandon their normal lives for the love of it.

The early 20th century brought scandalous activities to the *séance* room, especially with the partnership of the lovers, Eva Carriere, known as Eva C, and Madame Juliette Bisson. Eva C's manifestations and the photographs of her ectoplasm, a strange, other-worldly substance that appeared to emanate from parts of her body, sometimes in strange sexual shapes, were the inspiration for the vaginal ectoplasmic birth which occurs in my novel. When they originally met Bisson was married but invited Eva to stay in her studio. With the death of her husband in 1912, Eva moved in to a shared house with Bisson. Their *séances* were examined and catalogued by Baron von Schrenck Notzing and his

account, *Phenomena Of Materialisation*, shows a progression from the titillation of the famous mediums who had preceded Eva C, to more explicitly sexual activities.

In the early sittings Eva was stripped and examined by Mme Bisson alone, then dressed in clothes, including underwear that had been checked by everyone at the sitting. Physical examinations of the outer body grew to include detailed gynaecological exploration, again by Mme Bisson, who would then attest to the sitters that she had found nothing. These probing procedures were ostensibly to show that the strange substance which Eva C exuded from her mouth during some sittings had not been hidden about her body. Ectoplasmic emissions would become Eva's main feature as a medium and the one that led to international fame as well as an ever increasing barrage of stricter tests and controls.

Detailed accounts of Eva's menstruation were given to the Baron, as well as stories of supernatural activities that happened outside the *séance* room. On one occasion, after a *séance*

was unsuccessful, Eva retired to bed early, feeling tired but also suffering from a delayed period that was giving her pain. Bisson followed her, only to find her feverish and restless. She told the Baron that at Eva's bidding she removed all her night covers and clothes and massaged her abdomen at which point there was "an excrescence between the labia majora". The Baron noted that Eva's late period started the next day, as if the ectoplasmic matter had been some kind of blockage preventing it.

By 1912, the examinations and redressing were no longer necessary because Eva appeared at her sitting with the Baron completely nude except for a black cloth covering her legs and feet. Spirit matter would seem to flow from her breasts and the Baron would be invited to touch it. In the final séances even the cloth was lost and a naked Eva would writhe and cavort as various spirit substances and figures appeared, including, notably, a large spirit shaped penis that floated disembodied in the air.

A few years later, the celebrated same-sex couple, the writer Radclyffe Hall and Lady Una Troubridge, turned to the spirit world for help and forgiveness. Hall had become romantically involved with Troubridge when she was already in a serious relationship with Mabel Batten. When Batten died, Hall and Troubridge were racked with guilt and tried to apologise to Batten's spirit through various spirit mediums.

They became convinced that Mrs Osborne Leonard, a celebrated medium who had been the subject of a bestselling book, was genuine when she claimed to make contact with Batten and seemed able to disclose facts that no one else apart from the three of them could have known. They began to sit with her two and three times a week and compiled detailed notes of what they saw. They presented their accounts at two meetings of the Society for Psychical Research, known as the SPR, and then later in 1919 wrote a detailed version for the society's journal. The account was a censored one, the conversations between the purported spirit and the two women had to be significantly altered to hide the sexual nature of their relationship with each other. They also changed her initials from MVB to AVB in the hope that it might help to disguise her


Ectoplasm, a strange, other-worldly substance, appeared to emanate from parts of her body, in strange sexual shapes

identity. Noel Coward was friends with Hall and some critics claim that the ménage à trois between Batten, Hall and Troubridge was the inspiration for his play *Blithe Spirit*. But while the real-life trio were lesbians, the characters in the play were heterosexualised so that Hall became Charles, haunted by his first wife while trying to make a life with his second, with the comic character of the medium Madame Arcati based on Madame Leonard.

Despite the fact that their reports of the séances were esteemed in psychic circles, their relationship with the SPR was difficult, with many male members viewing them suspiciously on account of their lesbianism. In 1920 a member of the SPR's governing council even opposed Hall's membership on the grounds that she was an "immoral woman". Never one to shirk, Hall sued for slander and won.

In an amusing twist, much later in 1934, Hall became involved with a

beautiful, young Russian girl called Souline and had an uneasy ménage à trois with her and Troubridge. Una Troubridge turned again to Madame Leonard who gave helpful messages from the spirit world to Hall that Souline was not to be trusted. Hall wrote in letters how she was afraid at the way Troubridge's own worries had been substantiated by the spirit communication.

The séance was undoubtedly a place of many purposes. Some people believed they might redress past wrongs, say unspoken words to those they had loved and lost, or learn what lay in store for them after death. Others would use belief in it to influence their present circumstances. But it was also quintessentially a place of entertainment, and for some that meant sexual desire and erotic ritual, whatever their sexual inclination, something that was impossible in other public spheres. 



A Ghost's Story by Lorna Gibb is published by Granta Books and available to buy now, priced £12.99.



Eva Carrière, photographed at a séance in 1913



A different kind of beach holiday

It's the end of September and there is glorious sunshine the day we arrive on Lesbos, but everyone knows a storm is coming. It's been forecast for days and there are worries about how the refugee boats will hold up in the short but precarious crossing from Turkey. The UN refugee agency estimates that 3,000 migrants have died at sea so far this year trying to make it to Europe. The morgue and cemeteries on Lesbos are running out of space for the bodies.

We're on holiday, although we know that this will not be like any other holiday we've spent here before. Eresos, where we are staying, is a sleepy beach town in the remote south-west of the island, best known as the birthplace of Sappho. It's a good hour and a half's drive away from the areas most affected by the refugee crisis and, to the casual eye, looks the same as ever.

Look closer though, and everything has changed. The women's beach is unusually deserted: many of the women coming on holiday this summer have chosen instead to drive across the island to volunteer in one of the several overflowing refugee camps in My-

WELL-KNOWN AS A LESBIAN HOLIDAY DESTINATION, LESBOS IS NOW THE LANDING SPOT FOR THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES
MEL STEEL REPORTS

tilene, the island's port capital. Posters in the women's bars and cafés appeal for visitors to donate money, groceries and clothes, and weekly collections are taken directly to the camps and the landing beaches. The Sappho Women's Arts Festival dedicated its headline events this year to fundraising for the refugees. At Flamingo, a lesbian-run bar on the seafront, notices announce a volunteer rota for those who wish to help out at PIKPA, a small camp tending to those who have lost family members at sea or who have injuries or disabilities. The rota has been organised by Marieke Splinter, a 31-year-old Dutch theatre practitioner. She has visited the island many times before as a tourist but this year, having followed the news reports about what was happening, wanted to help. I ask her why, given the likely antipathy of many of the Muslim refugees towards women and lesbians. "Well," she says, "it's a small women's community here. Maybe we're more geared towards looking after each other. But beyond that, I felt it was my responsibility. This is a historic moment, and we will be judged by what we do right now. These

people are trying to get to Europe, not to Greece. It's not just up to Greeks to help them."

She made contact with PIKPA and established that there was a huge need for people simply to manage and organise clothing donations. "I thought, I can do that," says Marieke. "And that's something that tourists could easily help with for a day or two."

PIKPA is an oasis of calm compared to Kara Tepe and Moria, the squalid and overcrowded main camps and refugee processing centres in Mytilene. We spend a day there organising a room dedicated to sheets and blankets. In other rooms, volunteers of various nationalities are sorting clothes. Women's tops – winter! Men's trousers! Shoes – children's! Everyone here is a volunteer, including Konstantina Prokova, 26, who manages the camp. She came to Lesbos from her home in the north of Greece to study at the University of Mytilene, and stayed. She became involved with a local anti-austerity activist group with a mission to work within local communities in need – and says that it soon became obvious to her that the



At Mytilene port, refugees wait for the next stage of their journey. Left: abandoned lifejackets on Efthalou beach

greatest need was right here, in the refugee camps.

It's hard to describe the sheer scale of what is happening on Lesvos. This is an island with a resident population of just 85,000, mainly reliant on rural agriculture and tourism and hugely affected by the Greek economic crisis and EU-imposed austerity. Now the island is also having to deal with the biggest refugee crisis since the second world war. So far this year the total number of refugee arrivals is estimated by the UNHCR to be upwards of 220,000. In September alone 160,000 refugees have arrived, up to 3,000 daily. By the time I write this, two weeks later, it's closer to 7,000.

Efthalou is one of the several points on the 11km stretch of northern beach where boats land. On a calm day it looks like a strong swimmer could easily make the 6km from the Turkish shore on the other side – but the view is deceptive. This short stretch of sea can be treacherous. Last night a boat carrying 46 refugees collided with a cargo vessel in the darkness. Thirteen drowned, including six children. Since the body of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi was washed

up on the Turkish coast in early September many other children have died; but their stories remain untold.

The last time we came to Efthalou was to enjoy its natural thermal spring. Today we've travelled with Cookie Arnone, a Brighton-born Sicilian who has been volunteering for the last few weeks. Like many of the women we meet, she knows the island well, and spent the spring and early summer of this year watching the news from Greece with increasing dismay and disbelief. Finally she booked a month's leave from her day job as a mental health services manager, and got on a plane.

Thirty or 40 refugee boats have landed here by early afternoon. Most set off from the Turkish coast at first light, each boat designed to hold no more than 15 but loaded with anything up to 50 desperate people who have paid 1,000 euros each for the journey, plus an extra 100 euros for the life-jacket. They include the young and old, new-borns and heavily pregnant women. Most have never seen the sea before, and none knows how to sail or swim. The last one on board is told that she or he is the captain.

"This is a historic moment, and we will be judged by what we do right now"

Volunteers like Cookie help the new arrivals safely out of the water and provide food, blankets and water from a ramshackle stall set up on the beach. There is no international aid agency presence: volunteers just turn up at dawn and do what they can. The sheer volume of people is insane, and the need is immense. They can get through 1,000 euros' worth of bottled water in a day, just at this one landing spot. Medical attention is often needed: the day after we visit, a pregnant Syrian woman goes into contractions as she lands, and has to be rushed to hospital. A week later another woman gives birth on the beach.

The new arrivals are shocked, wet and cold, but mostly relieved and overjoyed. "Is this Europe?" they ask. Many have no idea they are on an island. "You mean we have to get on another boat? For 12 hours?" asks a young Syrian woman. She looks horrified.

From here, until the week before we arrived, refugees had to walk the 60km to Mytilene, in temperatures reaching the high 30s, in order to be registered and processed for the onward journey to Athens and beyond. ▶

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Boarding the ferry to Athens at Mytilene port. Below: a family arriving at Sikamnia beach warm up after the gruelling crossing from Turkey



Now, finally, the UNHCR and International Red Cross are paying for buses to transport people to a transit camp set up by volunteers on the roadside below Molyvos. The road is also the route of the little candy-striped tourist train that regularly chugs down the hill from the town. Blonde families stare and wave and take photos of the refugees as they pass.

The camp has been established for

just 24 hours when we visit it, and 3,000 refugees have already passed through. Today there are only 400 or so waiting here – mostly Syrians, but also Afghans, including many Hazaras – the Shia Afghan minority who make up one of the most persecuted groups of people on Earth. People wait patiently, still full of hope and eager to talk. Most have no idea what lies ahead.

Jenni James, a New Zealander who has been volunteering full-time for the last couple of months, is managing the set-up of the site and is anxious to secure the tarps that have been strung up from the rock face above. She has a background in festival management and a handy skill-set. Today the tarps are providing welcome shade; but

For more info, to donate or to volunteer:

- * RefugeesSTART: facebook.com/RefugeesSTART and refugees-start.co.uk
- * Help for Refugees in Molyvos: facebook.com/HelpForRefugeesInMolyvos
- * Lesbos Volunteers: lesvosvolunteers.com

HOW TO HELP

DONATE: Money is best as it helps volunteers buy what's needed on the ground, and order in bulk. Please check before sending donations of goods directly, as there are not currently enough volunteers to be able to sort and distribute them. Money is desperately needed right now to buy the following:


- * Waterproof compact sleeping bags (adults' & children's)
- * Foil blankets
- * ISO Therm base layers
- * Adults' waterproof jackets/rain ponchos
- * Four-person compact tents
- * Portable lights and rape alarms (for women in the camps and on the onward journey through Europe, where many have already been subject to sexual violence)
- * Food

VOLUNTEER: more volunteers are desperately needed, especially as the weather worsens. If you have only a week or two to spare, you can make a big difference by helping to cook and sort donations. If you have longer, there is a desperate need for people who can:

- * Lead a team of volunteers
- * Rent and drive a car
- * Speak Farsi, Arabic, Turkish or Greek
- * Have medical skills

tonight and tomorrow they will need to withstand heavy wind and rain. Like Cookie, Jenni says she was pulled here by the news over the summer. "I thought – what must it take for people to get in those boats and say that water is safer than land when they can't even swim? I thought, I can do this. I can help. I bought a ticket three days later."

Now Jenni and Cookie are two of a group of volunteers who, frustrated by the shamefully inadequate response of the international aid agencies to the crisis, have set up a new UK-based charity called RefugeesSTART, aiming to provide a focus for fundraising efforts and to provide practical help where it's needed, fast.

When the storm finally comes, the tarps hold, and there are miraculously no losses at sea. As the weather changes for the worst, though, more volunteers and supplies will be desperately needed. There are more than 400,000 refugees waiting on the Turkish coast to make the crossing. This crisis will not stop anytime soon. 

"What must it take for people to get in those boats and say that water is safer than land when they can't even swim?"

Why should we care about the refugee crisis in Lesbos? Because we are all human. Learn more at tinyurl.com/DIVALesvos.






Life is a cabaret at Aberystwyth's most happening queer event

ABERRATION

PHOTOS ALAN HALE

HEAD WEST AND BE PART OF THE QUEER ARTS SCENE THAT'S TAKING MID-WALES BY STORM

For the past two years a special kind of outing has been making waves in Aberystwyth. The seaside town is home to *Aberration*, an LGBT+ arts night run by Jane Hoy and Helen Sandler of *SpringOut*, and Ruth Fowler of *Enfys Aber*, about four times a year. Their last event, called *Cabarration*, was a packed cabaret night at Aberystwyth Arts Centre featuring music, comedy, burlesque, spoken word, aerial hoop and DJ, with performances from DIVA faves including Kate O'Donnell and Bethany Black. Past *Aberrations* have featured film, discussion and a queer quiz. Look out for future happenings and you too can be an *Aber Aberration*! 

aberration.org.uk
facebook.com/groups/aberrationcymru





TURKISH DELIGHT

I have been raised in a culture where I have seen friends awkwardly change into their swimsuits at lightning speed at the leisure centre. I have seen giant breasts on page three and body shaming in teenage magazines. And this is why the sight of naked women of all ages dousing themselves and each other in water without sucking in their bellies or striking seductive poses is both strange and beautiful to me.

At the Shokofabrik hamam, Berlin, you are asked to bare all. Manager Helga Röhlé explains to me that nudity is essential for an authentic hamam experience. "It's usually the British, American and Russian women who don't want to get naked. I really don't understand it!" she laughs loudly. I po-

GETTING NAKED AT BERLIN'S TURKISH BATH FOR WOMEN

WORDS NISHA BHAKOO
ILLUSTRATION RORY MIDHANI

lately smile along while firmly clutching my bikini bottoms.

"There is no reason for women to feel uncomfortable," Helga adds, "there are some mixed hamams where tourists only go to see naked bodies but this is not like that. This is special hamam – only for women. If men want a place like this, they will have to build it themselves. There is no male gaze here."

I ask Helga whether the hamam is popular with lesbians, I've read that it is on the Visit Berlin website; and the popular lesbian bar Marianne sits on the hamam's doorstep. "Yes it's popular with lesbians. It's a space where women are free to be themselves."

The hamam is part of Europe's biggest women centre Shokofabrik, a

former chocolate factory. It was the first hamam built in Germany. The Shokofabrik project came about in 1981 when local feminists started using the empty building as a squat. They began to re-build it with the aim of creating a place where all women felt welcome.

The women behind Shokofabrik are certainly a motivated bunch. In 2008, they launched the "We are the Kreuzberg ladies" campaign. The grim media reports of the area focused heavily on violence. The women used photography to show people another side of the area; they wanted to spread the message: "Don't just look at the bad boys; finally look at the girls!"

"It's a community here and that's why we have so many regulars. In



ish traditions and the history of the hamam. To illustrate, she begins to tell me stories about the Ottoman Empire, and how back then the hamam was designed to be a place where you could cleanse yourself for spiritual and physical purification in line with Islamic teachings.

After my tour, I finally enter the hamam. I actually feel a sense of relief as I let the pestemal drop. No one stares. No one points. In fact it's really liberating. I feel like Clark Kent taking off my spectacles. At the sink, I reach for the tas (silver cup) and fill it with water. I make sure the temperature is just right then I drizzle it slowly on to my body. It feels sort of erotic. I carry on dousing myself until my whole body is covered with water.

After I've scrubbed myself, I place myself on the hot stone in the centre of the room alongside the other women. I lift up my knees like the other women. It's all on display now. I stare up at the mosaic on the domed ceiling and just listen to my breath.

My meditative state is disrupted by what looks like a family of women entering the hamam – there are two teenagers, a middle-aged woman and an elderly woman. They chat noisily in German as they find a sink to sit at. It's strange to see a family so at ease at being naked in front of each other.

Back in the changing rooms, I speak to a group of Berliners who regular visit the hamam. They tell me that the hamam is highly addictive. Earlier Helga had told me about the hamam's crack-like qualities. Her stories included a woman making a stop in Berlin on a journey from Australia to the USA just to visit the hamam; and a group of women from Norway who spent three out of the four days of their holiday at the hamam.

I'm sad to put my clothes on. I feel like a kid changing into my school uniform on a Monday morning. I leave the changing rooms and am about to walk out of the door when I realise that I'm not wearing my shoes. I find Helga and ask her if she knows where they are. "The hamam has made you so relaxed, you can't even find your shoes," Helga says erupting with laughter. I laugh along, I must admit I do feel pretty chill. 🕯

hamamberlin.de

fact I recently went to the funeral of a 90-old-year woman who had been coming to our hamam for years," Helga tells me.

Helga reveals that the hamam has also been a place of personal healing. She applied for the job when her marriage broke down and her children and home were taken away from her. The hamam offered her "a new life".

I manage to swallow down my British prudishness along with my Turkish tea, and ask to be shown to the changing rooms. A young member of staff gives me a silk glove to scrub myself down with, the sabun (soap) and a pestemal (for cover up and to sit on in the hamam).

She takes me downstairs and opens the door to the hamam. She robotically launches into the dos and don'ts but I'm distracted by the sight of mermaids. It's a childish thought but it's the first thing that comes to mind as I watch the women softly watering their curvaceous bodies. I am in awe at how otherworldly it all is. Seeing them relax while showcasing their stretch marks,

cellulite and tattoos makes a refreshing change from the usual images of pouting baby-oiled naked women seen on adverts. A group of women silently lie side by side on the hot stone in the centre of the room while a young lesbian couple gently wash and caress each other. I'm keen to enter the hamam but the young woman wants to show me the sauna first.

I ask her if she's from a Turkish background, and she tells me that she's German. Helga appears and I ask her the same question. She's also German. I'm surprised. She tells me that most of the visitors are either German or tourists. I'm a little disappointed because the hamam's original purpose was to provide a place where Turkish women could integrate. There's a massive Turkish community in Kreuzberg. Turkish immigrants set up there after world war two when they were invited to West Berlin to work in the growing industry sector.

Sensing my disappointment, Helga reassures me that all staff members are knowledgeable about the Turk-

"There is no male gaze here. It's a space where women are free to be themselves"



RIDING THE YOGA WAVE

Many travellers know that the North African town of Taghazout (pronounced Tar-razoot) is virtually synonymous with surfing. Well-informed hipsters have been riding waves in these Moroccan shores since the early noughties.

This influx of boardies was largely due to the launch of surfing holiday and retreat company Surf Maroc, in 2003. Founded by husband and wife team, Vicki and Ollie Boswell, the company's initial focus was making surfing accessible to all budgets and abilities. But it quickly became apparent that surfers needed the mat and yogis wanted the board and as such, a dual-focus surf and yoga holiday was born.

As a yogi, I was intrigued. What was the connection between the (surf) board and the (yoga) mat? Why was this destination such a hit? And how did it cater to both – seemingly different – types of people?

It didn't take long to find out. Firstly, there was the setting. Situated around 40 minutes' drive from Agadir Airport, Surf Maroc's most luxurious

LUCY FRY
FINDS HER
BALANCE IN
THE HIPPIE
MOROCCAN
PARADISE OF
TAGHAZOUT

**"The
essential
nature of
both yoga
and surfing
is unity"**

location, Villa Mandala, overlooks the sea, adjacent to the very rustic "Banana Village" (which is actually two villages named after nearby banana groves). It's got a soulful, cosy vibe, traditional decor and local artists' mandalas on the walls, and sits no more than 100 metres (via an unkempt beach) from the ocean.

Our time there was like a (very blissful) Groundhog Day. Eat. Sleep. Surf-n-Yoga. Repeat... Woken from our pillows with the sound of the waves long before we were able to see their fierce tips curling across the sand, we'd head upstairs for our early morning yoga class to practice streamlining breath with movement, and vice-versa. Next it was time for breakfast; locally-sourced produce served up in traditional Moroccan tagines, with some fresh mint tea to boot. And all this before 11am, when keen surfers head off for their morning lessons on a nearby beach.

Here you'll be using the same focus as well as many of the same muscle groups that you did during yoga – you're primed and ready to ride the wave of the moment. Many keep going until 4pm when you head back for an evening yoga class, which helps you

get ready for tomorrow – the same routine – and so it goes on...

It's a complementary combination, particularly when diluted with tasty vegetarian food (vegan upon request) and a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. All you need to bring is an open mind, friendly disposition and resilient abdominal muscles.

"The quintessential nature of both yoga and surfing is unity," says Villa Mandala yoga teacher, Kimberley Rosenberg, who's been practising yoga for a decade and surfing for 18 months. "Both disciplines remind me of my greatest life lesson: I cannot change the world around me, however, when I focus on my breath – one of the things I can control – and shift my perception, the world around me changes, resulting in my inner happiness. When I paddle out to surf, that is my opportunity to get a taste of what I'm tuning into on my yoga mat – how I naturally ought to flow. Observation, listening, assessing, patience, respect, commitment, steadfastness, humility, self-acceptance, kindness, love, unity are all values that I can reflect upon after a surf session."

As well as insightful surf-yogi staff members like Kimberley, Surf Maroc's



Yogis receive surf coaching on the beach at Taghazout. *Below right: ready to dine at Villa Mandala*

holidays have another big attraction: Morocco's year-round sunshine. Mornings and evenings are fresher in winter months but temperatures still hit mid 20s during the day. More advanced surfers will be challenged between October and March whilst the spring/summer months are better for beginners and intermediates. Visit during New Year and (I'm told) you'll get a free pass to some fairly renowned parties.


And if all that bending, cruising and vegetarianism gets a bit much, there's plenty to see and do in the area, starting with the Wednesday market inbetween Villa Mandala and Banana Village. Selling everything from spices to nuts, rugs and slippers, it's what you might call a fairly immersive Moroccan experience (don't expect the Moroccan

local men to make eye contact with Western women) with hardly a tourist in sight and saffron sold for a pinch of the UK price.

If you're after a rustic kind of indulgence, a visit to the local hamam in the next-door town of Tamrat is essential. Here you'll be shuffled into a steam room (topless) and scrubbed to new heights of cleanliness. I think I lost 30 years' worth of dirt in an hour and at the cost of around £20. Further afield still (well, a two and a half hour drive north), there's the old port town of Essaouira with the Unesco World Heritage Site of the Medina (meaning old town). En route, there's the funky surfing hub of Imswan, another place to catch waves, rays and absorb the chilled out atmosphere. It's also three hours exactly from Taghazout to the inspirational city of Marrakech (though a new motorway extension to just outside Taghazout will soon reduce this further).

But be warned: however much you want to show off your surfer's tan, it's advisable to dress with a respect for local culture, covering shoulders and knees, though a headscarf isn't necessary in and around Taghazout. Morocco is very close to southern



Spain, yet its culture is very different. Though I heard locals report a strong underground gay scene in Agadir, the Muslim culture frowns upon public displays of affection and here homosexuality remains illegal. That said, staff at Surf Maroc are entirely without prejudice and have only one aim; that you go home healthier and happier than you arrived, and with a greater sense of balance. 

MORE INFO

EasyJet flies directly from London Gatwick or Manchester to Agadir in Morocco. easyjet.com

Surf Maroc offers differing packages for surf and yoga holidays, both for groups and those travelling solo. surfmaroc.com

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NEWS

EMOJI ROOM SERVICE



A hotel in New York has launched a new service allowing customers to order room service using emojis. Aloft's Text It, Get It features six packages including The Hangover, The Munchies and The Refresh and is one small step towards never having to speak to another human being again.

aloftmanhattandowntown.com

3 LESBIAN INSTAGRAMS THAT'LL GIVE YOU WANDERLUST



BUTTON AND BLY

We're big fans of Button and Bly's travel show, and their Instagram is full of

behind-the-scenes snaps from their excellent adventures.

[instagram.com/buttonandbly](https://www.instagram.com/buttonandbly)

LEZBACKPACK

Melissa Langley and Constance Taylor met in South Korea in 2011 and have been sharing their travel and lifestyle hacks ever since.

[instagram.com/lezbackpack](https://www.instagram.com/lezbackpack)



GLOBETROTTERGIRLS



Dani Heinrich describes herself as a digital nomad, and there's no filter on our love for her Instagram. Expect gorgeous pics of cake, street art and more.

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hotelduvin.com/locations/henley-on-thames

WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

GLOBETRENDER

Globetrender is a brilliant new online travel magazine by award-winning journalist (and DIVA contributor) Jenny Southan. From shining the spotlight on emerging travel destinations to features on articles on food and drink, this is one website that deserves a place on your bookmark list.

globetrendermagazine.com



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CLASSIFIED FEATURE - THE KNOLL, LAKESIDE IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

WINTER AND NEW YEAR IN THE LAKES



So as the leaves fall and the temperature drops with the winter fast approaching, we thought it time to catch up with our friends at DIVA Magazine and mention what a perfect venue this is for special occasions!

If you're looking for somewhere special for a Lake District romantic break then The Knoll is the perfect choice. We have 8 individually appointed ensuite bedrooms, a beautiful lounge, dining room and peaceful gardens. But if you really want to spoil yourselves, we have our Retreat. It's a chic and cosy apartment with lounge/dining, log burner, kitchenette, large bedroom with dressing area and a fabulous hot tub with private terrace. Perfect for a break away from it all with all the luxuries and tranquillity you'd want.



We are also offering our legendary New Year's Party for women on the 31st December and 1st January. It always goes down a storm and the all-inclusive two-night New Year package will let you sample our fantastic food. Book now as we're selling fast! It's not available online so call or email for details.

Of course, if you can't wait for Christmas, what about a lovely autumn or winter break? With gorgeous food, afternoon teas and stunning Lake District scenery you'd be mad not to and we've some great offers on at the moment. Check out our website!

Weddings for smaller events are our speciality. We're a dedicated team of women who can cater for your every need (well almost!) for that special day. Prices start from £5,000 to hire our facilities for 2 nights. Check out our Facebook page for pictures of some of the wonderful events we have hosted.

House parties start from £3,800 for a weekend take-over of the house including all catering. If you can be flexible and take the house midweek the price reduces!

You can also follow us on Twitter and Facebook for forthcoming events and general chat.

Go to www.theknoll-lakeside.co.uk to book online. Telephone 015395 31347 and ask for Jenny, Denise or Moira. Email info@theknoll-lakeside.co.uk



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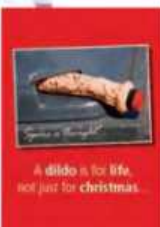


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Not so equal after all

IS YOUR WIFE ENTITLED TO YOUR PENSION ON YOUR DEATH?

WORDS FIONA DAVIDSON



Is your wife entitled to your pension on your death? You'd want her to be, obviously, but a recent Court of Appeal decision

has outraged gay couples across the UK. John Walker, a gay man aged 62, lost his fight to have his pension paid to his husband upon his death.

John began to live with his husband in 1993, registering their civil partnership in January 2006, and subsequently converting it into marriage. He had paid into his pension with his employer for two decades and was entitled to a substantial annual pension of £85,000 on retirement, which he took in 2003.

He was shocked to discover that despite paying the same contributions to his pension as his heterosexual colleagues the pension scheme rules meant his husband was not entitled to receive the same full spouse's pension of £41,000 per year on his death, as they were.

John thought that fairness had prevailed in 2012 when an employment tribunal ruled that the pension scheme's rules contravened European

laws and that his husband would be entitled to the pension, but that decision was overturned last year by an appeal tribunal. They ruled that an exemption in the Equality Act 2010 meant that pension rights accrued *before* civil partnerships became law in December 2005 did not have to be paid out in full to a civil partner.

John tried to persuade the Court of Appeal that this decision was flawed and that the decision breached his human rights saying it was contrary to European laws setting out the framework for equal treatment in employment.

The Court of Appeal unanimously rejected John's appeal and ruled that John's husband was not entitled to the pension and will only receive about 1% of the amount his heterosexual colleagues would receive.

Lord Justice Underhill was quoted as saying that he understood John and his husband would find the decision "hard to accept. But changes in social attitudes and the legislation that embodies those changes cannot fully undo the effects of the past".


Whilst changes in the law banning discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation have been made,

they do not apply retrospectively and as John retired in 2003, prior to the law recognising civil partnerships, he is not able to secure his pension rights on death for his husband. He commented: "How can this constitute anything other than the most flagrant discrimination?"

Are you affected by this decision? Will your wife or civil partner be entitled to your pension on your death?

When the Civil Partnership Act 2004 came into effect on 5 December 2005, on the same date an exemption was granted that employers could exclude pension contributions made prior to this date from being included in spousal benefits. So, first, have you made pension contributions prior to 5 December 2005? If so, check your pension scheme rules. Traditionally, occupational pension schemes state that when a member dies his or her spouse is entitled to 50% of the value of the pension for the rest of his or her life, regardless of when the couple married. Government research suggests that almost three quarters of occupational pension schemes have voluntarily extended this benefit to employees' same-sex spouses and civil partners. Public sector pension schemes ensure that surviving same-sex spouses and civil partners are treated at least as well as heterosexuals, regardless of retirement date.

If you find your scheme has not extended these benefits and your pension contributions have been made prior to 5 December 2005 then you should seek specialist advice from a pension advisor to consider your options.

It seems that for now, the courts are unwilling to challenge the legality of the exemptions in the Equality Act and the only way this discrimination will be overcome is if the government legislates to ensure that all schemes allow full sharing of the pensions of couples in same sex-marriages and civil partnerships. That cost is estimated to be around £3.3 billion. A large sum but a small price to pay for equality. 

Fiona Davidson is a partner at national law firm Weightmans.

Pension rights accrued before 2005 do not have to be paid out in full to a surviving partner



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MAYBE MORE

PERFECT DAY WITH YOU

Stylish, fem black F, 43, looking for non-scene F companion. Essex. Box 150999

FEMININE

F, 51, enjoys most things including cinema & meals. WLTm nice, genuine F & hopefully that someone special. Gloucs. Box 975380 ☎ DV 975380

QUITE BOYISH

F, 47, 5'6", likes to talk, not into the scene, into complimentary therapies & days out. WLTm F for f/ship, maybe more. Bradford. Box 909633

SINCERE, LOVING, THOUGHTFUL

F, 61, passionate about plants & gardens, enjoys walking, dogs/cats, cooking & quiet times. Seeks similar F for LTR. S Ldn. Box 379461 ☎ DV 379461

SLIM, DARK-HAIRED

F, 42, GSOH, enjoys the coast, horror & comedy films, seeks non-butth F, 35-45, for good times. Tyne & Wear. Box 726173 ☎ DV 726173

LOVING, LOYAL, FAITHFUL

Gay F, 42, 5'4", n/s, enjoys playing pool, tenpin bowling, bingo, nights in/out, day trips & breaks away. Seeks sim F. Plymouth. Box 819303 ☎ DV 819303

CHILLED, EASY-GOING

F, 42, likes having a laugh, going out for meals, staying in, walking & the cinema. WLTm F for f/ship+. Swansea. Box 804572

SIMILAR FEMININE F WANTED

Bi F, 49, enjoys pubs, live bands, the sea & clubs. WLTm a bi F or lesbian, who is willing to travel. Hereford. Box 999068 ☎ DV 999068

SEE THE SEA WITH ME

F, 70, lives in a seaside resort, enjoys theatre, reading & politics. WLTm special F to relate to & spend time with. NW. Box 853717

A DECENT FRIEND

F, 39, honest & genuine. WLTm a mature F, who is ready to settle down. Glasgow. Box 349323

FRIENDSHIP FIRST

Gay F, 53, 5'5", medium build, hoping to meet new friends, hopefully that special F for a few laughs & socialising with. Mancs. Box 395914

HONEST, GENUINE

Sincere, kind F, 37, feminine with long hair. Looking for M, looks unimportant, to settle down with. Glasgow. Box 734828

CURL UP ON THE SETTEE

F, 45, loves children & animals, cosy nights in & sad films. WLTm a nice F with deep blue eyes, 42-49, for LTR. Shrews. Box 709798

MESSAGE ME!

F, 30, looking to meet F for fun, f/ship & messaging. Wilts. Box 214114

LOVE ME FOR ME

F, 48, loves animals, playing board games, classical & rock 'n' roll music, movies & country walks. WLTm similar F. Falkirk. Box 452797

SLIM, WITTY

F, 49, blue eyes, attractive, 5'6", genuine, likes theatre, dinner, conversation & sports. WLTm F to laugh & click with. Essex. Box 157818 ☎ DV 157818

OUTDOORS PERSON

F, 53, 5'2". WLTm F, similar area & age, who enjoys meals out, movies & theatre, for f/ship & to see what happens. S Ldn. Box 408924 ☎ DV 408924

YOUNG, ATTRACTIVE

Sexy F, 28. WLTm nice, free, understanding F who is there for me 7 days a week. No jealous minded people. W Yorks. Box 145536

SLIM, BLACK-HAIRED

Brown-eyed F, 21, very close to her family. WLTm genuine, kind, nice, adventurous F. Mancs. Box 281994

SAY THE L WORD

F, 45, likes comedy, snooker & cosy nights in. WLTm kind, caring, funny F for loving r/ship. Shrews. Box 625239

THOUGHTS BECOME THINGS

Honest & caring F, 47, boyish, seeks feminine F. Come see the world with me. Clwyd. Box 196176 ☎ DV 196176

CHATTY, SINCERE

F, 53, enjoys socialising, walking, the pictures, theatre & meeting new people. WLTm F. Lancs. Box 943260 ☎ DV 943260

COMPATIBLE FEMININE F WANTED

F, 59, likes days out, meals out & cosy nights in. WLTm feminine gay F, for r/ship, if compatible. Notts / surrounds. Box 429489 ☎ DV 429489

LIFE, LOVE & HAPPINESS

Sincere, loving F, 56, seeks lovely, laid-back, feminine F to share life, love & happiness. Exeter. Box 623594 ☎ DV 623594

MEET, CHAT & HAVE FUN

Genuine, sincere F, 64. WLTm F, 60-65, for fun, outings & possibly more. Leeds. Box 443431 ☎ DV 443431

FLOWER IN SUMMER

F, 50, likes the garden. Seeks F, similar age. If you are interested, I would like to meet you. W Yorks. Box 662908

FUN & FLIRTATION

F, 51, likes gardening, cinema & all the general things. WLTm F to flirt with and get to know a bit better. Mersey/e. Box 785411

LOVELY

F, 27, seeks similar F for f/ship, fun & more. Wrexham. Box 620424

LOYAL, THOUGHTFUL

Gay F, 59, smoker, seeks affectionate, feminine gay lady, 45+, for girlfriend, fun & much more. Notts. Box 995264

VERY OUTGOING

F, 40s, slim, 5'6", red hair, blue eyes, WLTm F for fun times, maybe more. Swansea. Box 757493

RETIRED, PROFESSIONAL

Blonde, blue-eyed F, 60, 5'6", lots of interests & brilliant SOH, WLTm F as companion, friend or for r/ship. Cheshire. Box 245555

FRIENDLY, OUTGOING

F, 66, likes holidays, animals & meals out. Seeks nice F, 65-72, to meet up with & have a chat. Oldham. Box 438505

A GREAT NIGHT OUT

F, 31, enjoys travel, cinema, playing pool & bowling, looking for like-minded F for f/ship. Cardiff/Bridgend. Box 572639

FOOTSTEPS ON THE DANCEFLOOR

F, 57, 5'3", dark hair, likes car boots, reading, holidays & socialising. Seeks F for f/ship, r/ship. Mancs. | Box 888408

QUIET, SINCERE

F, 23, likes a few drinks out, seeks lovely F for fun times & a reason to be. Ayr. Box 357879

SINCERE, HAPPY

F, 50s, likes gardens & travel. Seeks nice F for something intimate. Belfast. Box 372189

AFFECTIONATE, CARING

F, 51, seeks genuine, similar F for f/ship & maybe more. Belfast. Box 357756 ☎ DV 357756

LOVES HAVING A LAUGH

Gay F, 42, loves socialising, seeks F for fun, f/ship & hopefully r/ship. Mancs. Box 588840 ☎ DV 588840

SEEKING MS RIGHT

Single, bi F, 57, attractive & full figured. Seeks F, similar age, for fun times. Cotswolds. Box 283751 ☎ DV 283751

FRIENDLY, HONEST

F, 24, student, seeks F for f/ship & intimacy. Cardiff. Box 599721

BI-CURIOS BUXOM

F, 52, size 18, seeks bisexual, or curious F, 50-65, for f/ship & fun times. Hull. Box 417395 ☎ DV 417395

HONEST, FUN

F, 43, likes socialising & lots of laughter. Seeks F for great r/ship. Mancs. Box 741884

THROUGH THE MIST

Attractive F, 52, 5'5", hazel eyes, seeks F for f/ship & r/ship. Gloucs. Box 145226

HONEST, SENSUAL

F, 63, 5'8", medium build, seeks similar F for good r/ship. Ldn. Box 584603

BIG & BEAUTIFUL

F, 49, big heart, fun, seeks F to be her soul mate. B'ham. Box 400696

GENUINE, FUN-LOVING

F, 52, likes cinema, nights in & out. Seeks F for fun times & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 523480 ☎ DV 523480

SINCERE, GAY

F, 36, seeks gay F for f/ship, nights out, meals out, etc. Rhyl. Box 163669

MUSIC LOVER

Fun, outgoing F, 41. Seeks F for nights in/out, socialising & cinema. Mancs. Box 291609

SLIM, FEMININE

Bi F, 48, seeks similar F for fun, f/ship & maybe more. Central Mancs. Box 301282 ☎ DV 301282

HONEST, EAGER

F, 43, seeks F for long-term, lasting r/ship. Darlington. Box 204027

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY

F, 53, slim build, WLTm F for f/ship, hopefully leading to LTR. W. Yorks. Box 411452

FRIENDLY, KIND

F, 52, 5'5", medium build, seeks similar F for mutual happiness & contentment. Mancs. Box 792911 ☎ DV 792911

GENUINE, FUN

F, 45, seeks F for socialising, laughter & r/ship. Mancs. Box 498200 ☎ DV 498200

EASY-GOING, NICE

F, 45, likes a laugh & socialising. Seeks F for fun & possible r/ship. Mancs. Box 789818 ☎ DV 789818

100% GAY

F, 54, seeks solvent, gay F for good laughs & r/ship. Mancs. Box 870496 ☎ DV 870496

SENSUAL, HONEST

F, 52, medium build, seeks F for good times, maybe more. Soton. Box 499883

GENUINE, FRIENDLY

F, 75, non-drinker, seeks F companion, GSOH, with car, for cinema, good food & more. Devon. Box 828190

HONEST, BISEXUAL

F, 49, 5'4", large build, seeks nice lady for f/ship & maybe more. Powys. Box 807825

ENTIRELY HONEST

F, 55, 5'10", has a dog & cat, likes long walks, a bit disabled, seeks F for good r/ship. Darlington. Box 381150

TEETOTAL, HONEST

F, 72, n/s, likes holidays, socialising & conversation. Seeks loving, caring F for good r/ship. Lancs. Box 822209

KIND-HEARTED, HONEST

F, 33, 5'8", medium build, likes walks, cinema & nights in. Seeks lovely F for r/ship. Co. Antrim. Box 194316

FRIENDLY, PLUMP, PRETTY

Bisexual lady, 61, seeks similar F for fun times. Gloucs. Box 237013

OUTGOING, BUBBLY

F, 49, fun, likes nights in/out & socialising. Seeks similar F for great r/ship. Co. Down. Box 657198 ☎ DV 657198

PROFESS, LIFE-LOVING

F, 60s, likes beach walks, golf & photography. Seeks kind, affectionate lady, GSOH, for r/ship. Hants. Box 457627

LOVING, CARING, GAY

F, 52, likes meals out, cinema & walks. Seeks caring, loving F for r/ship. Lancs. Box 745729 ☎ DV 745729

SINCERE, LOVING

F, 62, likes animals, quiet evenings & occasional meals out. Seeks F for loving r/ship. Herts. Box 405562

NO STRINGS

CALL ME FOR CHATS

F, 21, into things & bras. WLTm a new girlfriend to see what underwear you like. NW. Box 765602

FUN FEMALE WANTED

F, 25, skinny, long blonde hair, green eyes. WLTm F to chat with & have fun with. SW Ldn. Box 121981

A DEEP CONVERSATION

Petite F, 34, size 36C, blonde hair. Would like to have fun on the phone with the right F. Call me. Gloucs. Box 912869

ATTRACTIVE, BISEXUAL

F, 60s, has a partner, seeks similar, bisexual lady for adult fun & f/ship. N Surrey/Midddx. Box 812077

FEMALES RULE!

F, 22, seeks F for great times. B'ham. Box 556726

MUSIC TO MY EARS

F, 35, easy-going, loves life & likes music. WLTm F, local area, for sexy fun & f/ship. Merseyside Box 113991 ☎ DV 113991

JUST FRIENDS

HONEST, FRIENDLY

F couple, 46, love music & meals out. Seeks like-minded F friends for nights out in Glasgow. Box 282737 ☎ DV 282737

CONVERSATION & LAUGHS

Sincere F, 44, into food, cinema & drinks. Looking to put a group together of like minded Fs, 35-55, for f/ship. Sheffield. Box 210859 ☎ DV 210859

Customer Services:

Dating FAQs & Advice Line

0906 200 1036

Calls cost £1.10/min plus network extras

Complaints & Service Provider

0330 333 6946

CALL CHARGES: Calls to 09062 cost £1.10/min at all times (BT Premium Rate). Calls to 09067 cost 80p/min at all times. Calls to 0800 are free. Payphones & non BT network provider charges may vary. 0800 numbers may be chargeable from mobiles. **TEXT SERVICE:** Replying to an advert is charged at £1.50 for every text response received. Advertisers will be charged 50p for every text response received and 50p for texts alerting them that they have a voice message. Please take care to follow the instructions as all messages are charged for, including error messages - charges dependent on shortcode. All texts sent must be no more than 160 characters & your standard network charges apply. SMS shortcodes are reverse billed at the following rates: 85010 - 50p; 84010 - £1.50. Available on all UK networks. 18+ only. **Service provided by ATS, PO Box 788, London EC1V 7ZA.** **DISCLAIMER:** DIVA Magazine assumes no liability for the content of, or reply to, any personal advertisement. The advertiser assumes complete liability for the content of all replies to any advertisement or recorded message and for any claims made against DIVA Magazine as a result thereof. The advertiser agrees to indemnify and hold DIVA Magazine harmless from all costs, expenses (including our solicitor's fees), liabilities and damages resulting from or caused by the publication or recording placed by the advertiser, or any reply to such advertisement. By using Dial-a-Diva, the advertiser agrees not to leave his/her telephone number, last name, or address in his/her voice greeting message. Your ad may appear in other publications.



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NO PROBLEM

IF YOU'VE
GOT ISSUES,
WE CAN HELP

WORRIED MY FAMILY WON'T ACCEPT MY NEW GIRLFRIEND

Dear Jane,
I'm going home to my family this Christmas and I'm worried that they're going to say something about my new girlfriend. She's Muslim and her own family are not that accepting of her and mine are not the most open-minded people either – they read the Daily Mail! I do love them but to be honest if they say anything that upsets my girl I'll probably want to walk. That will be difficult if it happens on Christmas or Boxing Day because we don't have a car and there won't be anywhere to go since they live in a tiny village. Any suggestions on how to manage it and stop it from becoming a Christmas to remember for all the wrong reasons?

Kat

Hi Kat,
Families, eh? Can't live with 'em, can't do without 'em. Or at least perhaps there's a way to address the situation that will allow you to stand your ground? I'm assuming your parents haven't yet met your new girlfriend and you're worried

that their prejudice might make you and your girlfriend feel awkward and unwelcome. It's probably not escaped you that Christmas is a Christian festival and that Christianity, as I understand it, accepts and loves everyone equally, at least that's what my lesbian and gay Christian friends tell me. Sadly for some, however, the loving equally bit seems to have become lost in translation.

Have you tried speaking to the family members in question in advance, telling them that you really want to spend Christmas with them but that if you do, you'd like them to be as welcoming to your new partner as they would be to any guest in their home? I've heard that this approach has been successful in one case I'm thinking of and that the couple in question borrowed a car from a friend so they could make a quick getaway if they felt uncomfortable.

Christmas is a time of high stress – the weight of tradition and unrealistic expectations can bring out the worst in some of us – and sometimes it's simply not worth the hassle, so have you considered not going? Why put yourself or your new partner through the painful experience of implicit or explicit racism? Perhaps another, less loaded occasion would be a better way to introduce your family to her and vice versa?

If you feel you must spend some time with them on the big day, how about booking a B&B nearby, so that you can minimise contact time?

jane

READERS' REPLIES


Sorry, this may not sound helpful but I would suggest that Christmas isn't the right time to introduce your family to your new partner. In my humble opinion, I'd meet on neutral territory over a coffee the first time. Christmas can be a stressful time, and as you say, you'll be staying there. You are going to feel on edge wondering if something will go wrong. It's also quite a pressurised situation for your girlfriend, meeting new people and staying in their home. Regardless of sexuality or religion, big events such as family Christmases, weddings etc, aren't really the best time to introduce new partners. I'm sure your partner will be equally as

nervous/anxious but might not want you to know that. You're putting too much pressure on yourself and on your girlfriend, so much so that you probably won't enjoy your visit even if everything works out ok.

Sarah Danielles

Don't go. Have your own celebrations, whatever that may be. The best thing I ever did was stop buying into the bullshit that doesn't make me happy. If everyone did the same the world would be a happier place.

Yvette Darrington



Zentoy



Zentoy
App



zentoy.com

A very techy Christmas

DIVA GEEK RHODA MEEK SHARES HER CHRISTMAS WISH-LIST

It is a wonderful time to be alive. There are so many gadgets around that even a hardcore geek like myself struggles to keep up. With the C-word just around the corner, you may be drowning in options for the perfect gift for the geek in your life. Alternatively, you may have your head in your hands, drowning your sorrows as you try to work out the difference between HD, HDD, HDR, HDMI and HRT. Never fear. I made a list of everything I want Santa to bring me and I thought I'd share it with you, too.

WHAT'S
YOUR CURRENT
GEEKY OBSESSION?
LET ME KNOW!
GEEK@DIVAMAG.
CO.UK

Rhoda Meek is an IT consultant and designer with a social media addiction, a crochet habit, a RaspberryPi and two left feet.

[wodieskodie](#)
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After all that shopping, you may need a nap. Enter, the Bluetooth Pillow. Its stereo speakers play your choice of lullaby from within the pillow, ensuring the sound doesn't disturb your dozing partner. Available at [red5.co.uk](#).



AND FINALLY...

If you need to relax before that nap, try downloading an app called Dildodroid, which promises to "turn your phone into a dildo". It has variable speeds, apparently. Personally, I worry about the hygiene implications. Available on [Google Play](#).

PHOTO TIME

Nothing would say "I love you" this Christmas like a drone. Honestly, they are possibly the hottest thing out there right now. If money is no object, try the stunning DJI Phantom III. It comes with a 12 megapixel camera and full HD recording. Available from Jessops for just under £900. [jessops.com](#)

On a budget? No worries; there are drones out there for a lot less dosh. Try the UDI U818A, available on Amazon for less than £50. It might not take the quality of photograph you would get from the Phantom but for a beginner it looks great!



BRING ON THE GAMING

Virtual reality headsets are another of the hot tech items around this festive season. (Check out DIVA columnist Jay Bernard's thoughts on these on p12.) True, not much is compatible with them as yet, and you might look odd wearing one down the pub, but it will certainly get you some geek cred. A mere £170 will buy you a Samsung Gear VR headset, immersing you in stunning 96-degree visuals. It is only compatible with a Samsung S6, though. Might as well treat yourself to a new phone whilst you're at it... [samsung.com/uk](#)



Still on a budget? Yeah. Me too. A grrrl can dream, though. For the hardcore gamer in your life who isn't getting a VR headset, what about an awesome Playstation messenger bag? A mere £29.95 at [red5.co.uk](#).



SPORTY? I GOT YOU COVERED

Check out these bad boys. Balance Boards, Street Gliders, Segways, whatever you want to call them, are beyond cool. You stand, you glide. I guess it might need a little core strength and general balance but that aside, they have to top any sporty geek's list. The top models aren't cheap, but you can pick one up on eBay for about £160. At the time of writing, it is illegal to ride them on UK roads or pavements, but there are private driveways and laminate floors, right? Gaze at their beauty here: [balance-boards.co.uk](#).



On the less financially ridiculous side, try a pair of Bluetooth headphones for size. They have revolutionised my runs. No more tangled cables, or mid-run headphone disasters. Check out Aneor or Cheetahs from £14.79 on [Amazon.co.uk](#).



November / December

D
I
V
A
R
Y

**SING, SKATE,
DANCE, LUST,
LAUGH, LISTEN,
WATCH, SHOP
AND BULLY
OFF. IT'S A
BUSY MONTH!**

25.11

SING IT BACK!

Albert Hall, Manchester

The Time is Now! Roisin Murphy dazzles and delights with her patented brand of sex and electronica.

roisinmurphyofficial.com

27.11

L-NATION

The Looking Glass Cocktail Club, London

A cocktail lounge night with queer and arty vibes! Sweden's most famous queer club DJs and artists bring you L-nation. Expect underground trap and deep house mixed with more commercial sounds.

tinyurl.com/DIVALNation

28.11

TRANSCRIBES

Kings College London, London

Imogen Binnie and Casey Plett are at the vanguard of a new revolution in transgender literature. Hear them read at this one-off London event. Be there.

tinyurl.com/DIVATranscribes

28.11

SERIOUS ABOUT MUSIC

The Wee Red Bar, Edinburgh

No More F-ing ABBA is an alternative queer night dishing out a tonic for pop-weary gays and pals.

facebook.com/hmfabba

28-29.11

CAM AGAIN?

Citywide Venues, Cambridge

Ali Smith and Carol Ann Duffy are among the queer rockstars jiving letters and intellect at this year's Cambridge Literary Festival.

cambridgeliteraryfestival.com

5.12

FAIR TRADE

RVT, London

Christmas edition of the Royal Vauxhall Tavern's popular queer wares fair.

tinyurl.com/DIVAxmasv

5.12

ROLLING STONE

Southbank Centre, London

Everyone's favourite gay watering hole Dalston Superstore takes over a

specially-made roller rink for a night of absolute debauchery. Expect a stellar cast of all their finest DJs, fierce queens and performers. Get your skates on!

tinyurl.com/DIVArolls

5-6.12

PURE FILTH!

Hackney Showroom, London

Ten-hour homage to the Pope of Trash – John Waters. film screenings, tea-bagging, trampolining, a competition to find the filthiest person in London. Don't forget to regurgitate your praise, its Water's version of a standing ovation.

tinyurl.com/DIVAfilthywaters/

6.12

PEACHES

Electric Ballroom, London

Peaches is playing in London and she is going to make you EAT IT UP. Anything to add? Didn't think so.

peachesrocks.com

11.12

A RITZY AFFAIR

The Ritzy, London

LGBT urban social in Brixton with DJs, dancing, spoken word, and installations.

tinyurl.com/DIVApam



2.12

BULLY OFF!

Sedgely School playing fields, London

Hockey demon? Haven't played since school? London's gay/bi women's hockey club trains on Wednesday evenings and plays in the Kent Women's league on Saturdays, September to March. Dust off those shin-pads.

remnantshockey.org.uk



27.11

THE PRICE OF SALT

Cinemas, nationwide

The adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's lez-changing novel *Carol* hits the big screens! Cate Blanchett. Cate Blanchett. Cate Blanchett. Get in line, bishes. See review on p33

12.12

NOT THE X FACTOR

Westminster Quakers, London

Many Voices is an LGBTQ+ monthly singing-for-its-own-sake group. No auditions, no performances, just singing for fun. You don't even have to believe you can sing!

many-voices.co.uk

15.12

UH HUH HUH

Colston Hall, Bristol

Keeping floppy black hair and kohl in lesbian joints since forever, worship all things Spiteri at this Bristol gig.

texas.uk.com/#livedates

19.12

GET SASSY!

Spinnaker Tower, Portsmouth

Party in style in the South Coast's most iconic venue. Soak up the view and hustle with gay atoms in a gay atmos.

tinyurl.com/DIVAsassy

31.12

NEW QUEER'S EVE

Eagle, London

Scottee's NYE parties are better than yours. Guests number: Jayde Adams, Ginger Johnson, Fagulous, Unskinny Bop among others... Plus drag queens on saxophone and fat opera singers ironing your clothes.

tinyurl.com/DIVACampNYE

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ON
WHERE
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DIVA



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Ellen
Page

"I wish I had
come out sooner"

DIVADATE

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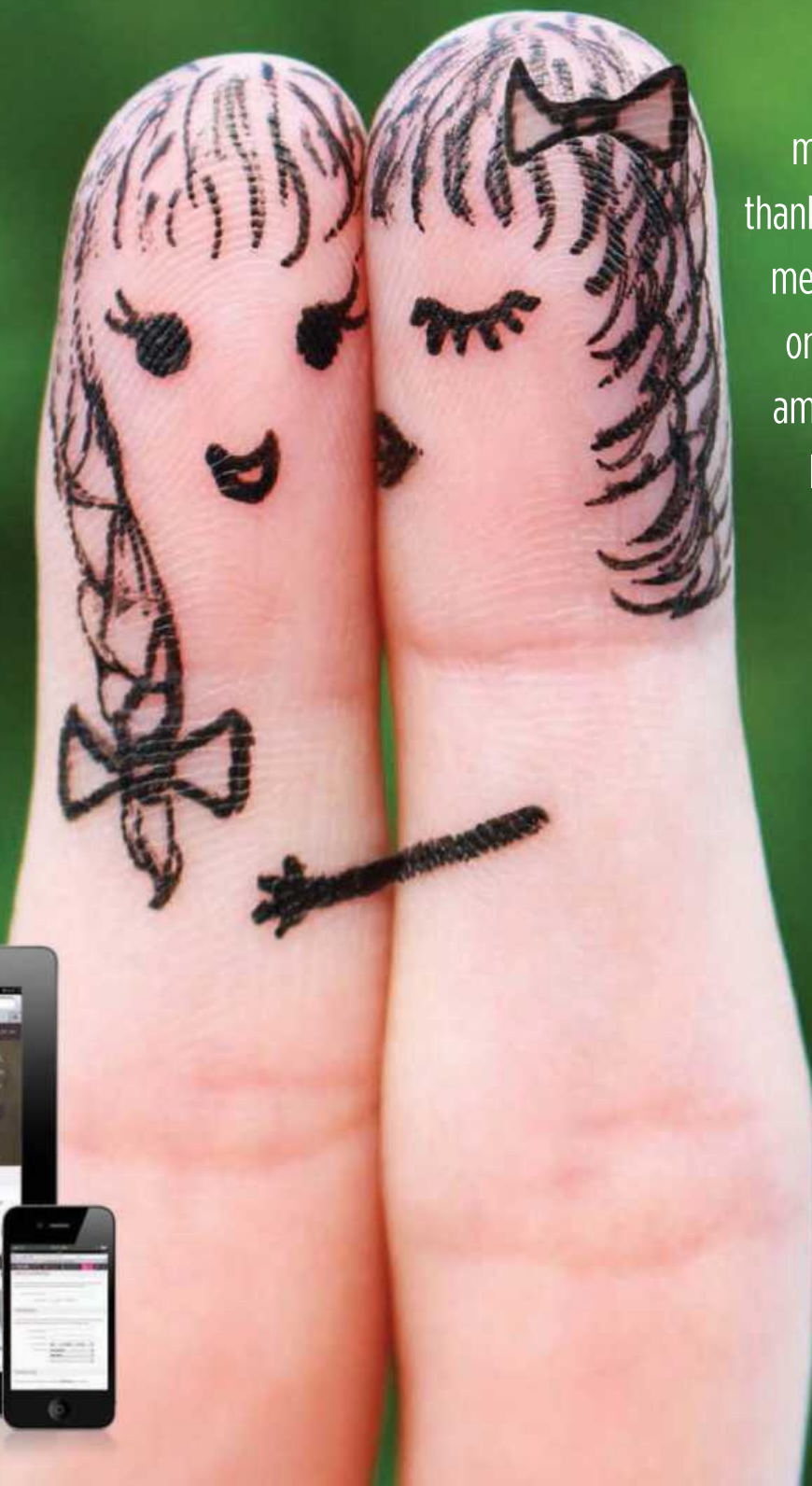
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"Just a little message to say thank you, you put me in touch with one of the most amazing women I've ever met"



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